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THE LADY FROM L.U.S.T. #2

LEAGUE OF UNDERCOVER SPIES AND TERRORISTS

LAY ME ODDS

ROD GRAY



The further misadventures of operative OH-OH-SEX.
The world's sexiest spy who is paid to sleep on the job.

EVE DRUM IN ACTION

"Tell me the name of your contact, honey," I wheedled, "the one who gave the microfilm to you."

The Satyr eyed me from my toes to my blonde head. He smiled wryly and said, "Ducks, you're a knockout."

I giggled, shimmying my shoulders so that my white girl-treasures swayed from side to side. Then I squatted down and let my knees go wide in the position Shiek Nefwazi calls the *mokorfeuss*, much in the manner of a frog at rest. I smiled up at the Satyr. I hooked my hands under my knees and rolled over onto my back, into the *el modefeda* posture.

He dropped toward me, intent only on his clamoring carnality. He was fast, but my right leg was a lot faster. I got a foot in his belly, I got a grip on his shirt with both hands and heaved with arms and leg.

He was in the perfect position for the stomach throw, the *tomoe nage*. He yelled as he went backward high above my head. I let go of him and he went on without any help, to come crashing down on his back.

I swung up and over and squatted on his chest. "Sweetie," I said, "don't be difficult. I know all the holds, erotic and otherwise. Now, who's got the microfilm."

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by

ROD GRAY

A TOWER BOOK

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CHAPTER ONE

The room was locked and the windows were bolted from the inside, yet a man lay dead in the room into which I was trying to gain admittance. And judging from my quick glance into that room from the flagstones of the back patio, Eric Downes could not have shot himself.

Eric Downes had been my contact man; he had a roll of precious microfilm which I was to pick up and bring back to L.U.S.T. headquarters with me. It was a routine job, there were supposed to have been no emergencies like a man shot to death inside a locked room. I was on a vacation here in merry old England after my part in the Balder Cunningham affair in Miami, and I wanted fun and games, not murder and sudden death.

I was supposed to rest up, soak in the sunshine at Brighton and the neon lights in a couple of private clubs in London. Instead of this, my fingers were working a slim

length of metal in the study-door lock of the manor house that had been the property of Eric Downes.

My name is Eve Drum. They call me Oh Oh Sex as a sort of joke (I hope) at that secret agent organization known as L.U.S.T., the League of Underground Spies and Terrorists. Only its enemies know about L.U.S.T., which is a natural child of the State Department by way of the C.I.A. Our job is to do those things which must be done to preserve peace and the happy continuance of O.A.S., N.A.T.O., and other assorted initial groups.

I am a female blonde, the sexiest spy in the business, with meaningful measurements of 38, 24, 35. I weigh a hundred and ten pounds in my smooth bare skin. I am the wearer of the red and white Sixth Dan belt in judo, an expert with rifle or revolver, ditto swimmer. I can throw a knife with reasonable accuracy, and I can usually open a lock like the man who made it.

Right now, however, this damned Chubb was resisting my every effort to pry its pin-tumblers loose from their cradles. I panted, I swore in a definitely unladylike fashion. I cursed David Anderjanian who is my case officer in L.U.S.T., and his thrice-damned assignment sheets.

Why do all these things happen to *me*?

If the local constabulary should chance to pay the Downes manor house a visit, they would find a pretty L.U.S.T. agent bending over with her mini-skirt up to her behind, trying to make an illegal entry into a locked room where a recently dead man lay lifeless. I had the feeling this was the one morning the police would decide to stop in and exchange neighborly pleasantries with this man Eric.

This gee damn lock was fighting back at me, resisting my every effort to get it open. I leaned my head against the door and drew a deep breath. My father was a locksmith; he had taught his only daughter all he knew about locks and keys, which was plenty. I told myself I could open the eff damn thing, just give me time.

I bent to the lock, I moved the metal rod this way and that. I held my breath. The rod caught. I heard a faint click of metal on metal. Ever so gently—I did not breathe—I wriggled the rod. A tumbler clicked.

I pushed. The door opened.

I was staring into a wood-paneled library, the thick carpet of which held a twisted dead body that had been shot in the back of the head with an antique dueling pistol. The pistol lay on the far edge of the big desk where it had been hurled by the recoil action, its muzzle now pointed away from the dead man. Most of the walls were filled with books on shelves built into the paneling. There was a standing globe of the Earth, a library ladder, a couple of wooden *prie-dieux* holding huge volumes, and various assorted odds and ends which a British bachelor in his forties might possess.

I tiptoed across the carpet.

Eric Downes had lived alone. A charlady came in twice a week to clean up any messes he might make. He had not made much of a mess in dying. The hole in the back of his head was neatly round, faintly blackened by gunpowder. He lay huddled as he had fallen. Death had been instantaneous.

I straightened and touched the desk with my eyes. I would have liked to have found his murderer, but I had something more important to attend to. I must find the roll of microfilm I was to bring back to L.U.S.T. headquarters.

I have been trained to search a room. I began to do so, quietly and with thoroughness. I made sure the corpse did not have the film on his person, as best I could without destroying evidence. I went over the carpet and under it, the desk, the books on the bookshelves (and what a job that was!), the keyholes in the doors. Outside the door through which I had entered, there were two other doors to the library. One door led into the lavatory. The other was locked and useless, for it had been boarded up and plastered over on the other side to widen the dining room wall.

After three hours, I was dirty, dusty and defeated.

The microfilm was nowhere in the room.

I had no time to search the whole house. This was a task which would take weeks. I went over to the desk and stared down at the dueling pistol that had killed my contact man. It was a beautiful piece of work. It was a rare ivory flintlock made by Van den Brock of Maastricht about

the middle of the eighteenth century, long and slim and deadly, for all its beauty. The butt was shaped in the head of an Oriental girl.

I tried to think back to the last briefing I'd had from my case officer, David Anderjanian. He had told me Eric Downes would turn over the microfilm to me on presentation of my authority, which consisted of a set of my fingerprints which he would take. Since he had my prints already on plastic-coated paper, he could verify my identity easily enough.

Eric Downes had gotten the microfilm from his own contact, a man David knew only by the name The Satyr. Later, I was to learn the name was very appropriate. The Satyr hung around the strip joints in Soho, and was in the habit of asking the strippers to step out with him after work.

It would be like hunting the proverbial needle in the fabled haystack. I did not know whether finding The Satyr would be any help to me, he probably knew no more about the microfilm than I, but I had to do something!

The thought occurred to me that Eric Downes might not have contacted The Satyr, that The Satyr might still have the film on his person. I dared not let even that slim chance elude me.

I would go back to London. I would visit Soho.

First, I slipped the plastic-covered paper that held my betraying fingerprints into my handbag. Then I closed and re-locked the library door, and tiptoed down the long hall and out the front door into brilliant sunshine.

The English countryside in this very early springtime of the year was a brilliant green. I have never seen grass quite so green as English grass, anywhere. It leaped out at you from lawn and meadow and sodded field. It made me glad, suddenly, to be alive.

Poor Eric Downes! I wondered who had shot him—and why. It might have been a H.A.T.E. (the Humanitarian Alliance for Total Espionage) agent, a spurned girl friend, even a jealous husband. H.A.T.E. was the likeliest choice, however, for H.A.T.E. is the bugaboo of L.U.S.T., our own personal bogeyman with which we maintain a constant vendetta.

I went around the side of the house and just before I

stepped onto the patio I saw two footprints, one oddly deeper than the other, and where this deeper print pressed into the loam there was a shallower rut just behind it, as if it dragged something behind the heel. I studied them a moment, but could not understand what might have made that deeper imprint.

On the patio flaggings I peeped in the big library window once again, seeing the desk almost within arm's reach of me, except for the thick pane of glass between. I ran a gloved hand over the glass, wondering if by some crazy chance I had missed a bullet hole.

No bullet hole, nothing to show how the murder might have been committed. It began to look more and more as if the dueling pistol had been jarred into firing, catching my contact in the back of the head with its smooth round ball. A damned crying shame, because Eric Downes had been a good man. An R.A.F. lieutenant shot down during the battle of Britain, he had gone into espionage work when the doctors certified that he was no longer fit to fly a Spitfire.

About ten years ago, Eric Downes had retired to putter about on his estate here in Somerset. From time to time he accepted small assignments for a fee, perhaps out of sheer boredom, perhaps to make ends meet. I never knew his financial status.

Now fate had caught up to him in the shape of powder and ball. Oddly, I felt that it might be all my fault.

There was no sense standing around and blaming myself for accidents—or deliberate murder, if murder it was. I had to lam out of here and back to London.

To Soho and The Satyr.

I ran to the Austin Healey Sprite I had rented in London, and started up the engine. If The Satyr dated strip teasers, if he had a thing for ecdysiasts, then I would peel down with the best of them. I revved the motor, shot the shift into gear, and roared down the gravel path.

I had to have a plan of action. I felt sure that places like the Sunset Strip and Raymond's would have more strippers waiting for jobs than I could shake a gee-string at. I needed a gimmick.

I scooted the Sprite along a narrow twisting road that ran from Glastonbury toward Wells. There was little traffic.

a Frames bus filled with vacationers, a small truck bearing crated eggs, an MG Midget driven by a bearded man. I had plenty of time to think.

Sure, David Anderjanian had nicknamed me Oh Oh Sex, but I am modest enough to admit that there are plenty of females with just as good shapes as mine, even maybe with just as good breasts and legs. So I had to do more than show my nipples or my bare behind to a lot of sex-surfeited onlookers, assuming I could get a strip job.

I could be Cleopatra in an Egyptian kalasiris of sheer linen and with an uraeus on my golden locks. I would do a sort of snake dance with a make-believe asp. Yeeech! I might make a good Lolita for the crowd, in baby dolls and a braided asp. Yeech! again. I might make a good Lolita for the crowd, in baby dolls and a braided wig. Nahhh! So how about Lady Godiva? I refused to share the billing with a horse.

Still, I had to come up with something!

Think, girl spy: Think of men and what men like. I knew plenty about men and what they liked. But I couldn't go on a stage and do anything like *that*.

I had no other ideas. My mind was blank.

I wheeled the Sprite into London by way of Old Brompton Road, passing through South Kensington and Knightsbridge. There was a spot of traffic here and there so I had little time to think about the gimmick I needed.

I parked at the car rental garage.

I would walk to Soho by way of Oxford Street. It was not a long walk, but maybe by the time I reached Oxford Circus, I would have thought of something. It began to rain when I was about four blocks from Regent Street.

It rains in England every other hour, just about. The rain lasts maybe ten minutes to half an hour—just long enough to get you soaking wet—and then it stops and the sun comes out. You would swear it pours at the exact time you are unprepared for it. Now I know why Englishmen carry umbrellas. They never know when they might need them.

I only got half soaked, actually, because I ducked into the entrance to a bridal shop. I looked at the rain, I watched the people walking along unconcernedly, I told

myself I simply must develop an English nonchalance to rainwater.

I even looked in the display windows at wedding gowns.

After a time the rain was gone and the sun with it. I departed the bridal shop door and moved on Soho. I walked happily, I even hummed a bar or two. For now I had my gimmick.

I would be a brand new bride stripping down for her bridegroom. It was a natural. I would be eager, yet shy. bashful but bold. I told myself the theatre manager would be a fool to turn me down.

Soho is that area of London that falls between Mayfair with its Georgian buildings and fancy shops, and Holborn, which houses the Smithfield markets, where at one time you could buy somebody else's wife if you had the urge and the cash, and Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is the theatrical section of swinging old London, and Shaftesbury Avenue is its Main Street.

The strip shows starts in the morning, at a quarter of high noon, and go on long into the night. Breasts for breakfast, if you eat late, or behinds for brunch. You can get ecdysiasts with your eggs and ham, if you like the mixture.

I bypassed a couple of places, like the Red Rooster and the Revue Bar. I was going to settle for something not quite so plush. After all, while I've removed a Maidenform bra before a man in my time, I've never slipped off my unmentionables in front of a big crowd.

The sign read: OFF LIMITS.

It hung before a big glass door, to one side of which was a display board behind a glass panel, crammed with pictures of strippers in pasties and panels. They were all good-looking girls, but they didn't scare me. I could strip down with the best of them.

My only worry was, did The Satyr frequent the Off Limits? I told myself he must, if he specialized in this type girl. After all, how many new strippers came along for him to date? A new body would catch the eye and make tongues wag.

I walked into a dim interior to the sound of a piano and the sight of a girl strutting on a little stage along one wall.

There were maybe twenty men seated at the tables sipping bitters, as our English cousins name their beer.

I paused a moment, staring.

The girl was down to a black *cache-sexe*. She was doing a slow grind, her white thighflesh rippling as her hips dug and twisted. Her breasts were like small melons, shaking and jiggling, and the nipples were a bright red. I thought that voices should be raised and feet be pounding the bare floor planks, but the room was silent except for the piano. Englishmen are very polite.

I moved toward the bar.

"I'd like to see the manager," I told the lady barkeep.

"I'm the manager," she answered gruffly. "And we don't need any more strips."

"Not even a bashful bride baring her bod?"

She hesitated with a hand on the tap. Something glinted in her eyes. "Bashful bride?" she repeated slowly.

I hooked a nyloned leg over a stool and leaned closer. "Every man in the world has either spent a wedding night or is looking forward to his wedding night, when his little bride will hop between the sheets with him. I give some a preview. I make others remember."

The woman looked past my shoulder at the girl onstage. She was turning her backside to her audience, shaking the soft buttocks she exposed. The room was so silent I could hear a man slurp his ale.

"No imagination," I murmured.

"And you have?"

"Try me for a week," I invited.

"Fifteen pounds the week. You bring in trade, I'll up it to a hundred," she told me.

I pouted. "Fifteen pounds won't even pay for my props. Make it twenty and you've got a deal."

She scowled; she knew the value of a shilling, did the lady. Suddenly she grinned. "Tell you what, ducks. You put on your act and I'll see about making it twenty. I'm not one for buying a pig in a poke."

I shrugged. I did not need the money, this was only a temporary thing, until The Satyr showed up for a date.

"So okay, so I'm out dough if you don't like me," I muttered.

She grinned. "I'm doing a British girl out of a job, Yank.

You've got to prove yourself to me. You colonists think you're all so smart."

"How did you know I'm an American?"

"Ducks, all you have to do is talk."

"What time's the first performance?"

"Be here at six. First show starts at seven, with you in it. Two more shows, at nine and then eleven. After that you're on your own."

I was a little surprised that the show should end so early. The lady manager shrugged her plump shoulders, explaining that she could not compete with such posh places as Raymond's and The Whiskey a GoGo.

Under the law in England, no woman may appear nude and move, in a public place. It's okay if she is naked and does not move, however. The catch-word is public. To get around the legal ban on strippers who parade naked all over the place, these strip joints become private clubs. There are no such laws for private clubs.

"Ta ta then," I said, wiggling my fingers.

I had to go practice being a bride.

It was raining again so I ran for the bridal shop. I had no time to waste on such luxuries as staying dry during a brief thundershower. I had to buy a white satin wedding gown and assorted accessories.

I came into the bridal shop squeezing water out of my mini-skirt. A salesgirl hurried toward me, making sympathetic sounds. I flashed her a brief smile, then caught my skirt in two hands and squeezed. Water dripped down.

"I need a bridal gown," I said, shaking myself like a hound dog shedding water. "Actually, I think I'd better have two gowns."

She looked startled. "Two?"

"When one gets dirty, you know."

She nodded, mouth a little open, eyes wide. I give her credit, she was game. She guided me toward a number of dummy models set on a little daises.

"They have to be the same," I muttered. "I can't have two different wedding gowns, now can I? There might be a bit of confusion."

She swallowed, nodding like an automaton. I am sure she thought me stark, raving crazy.

"We can't have them getting spoiled," I added brightly.

"*They?*" she yelped. "There's more than one?"

"My wedding dresses have to be strongly made, against constant wear and tear."

The salesgirl rolled her eyes, visualizing a succession of husbands ripping my garments off me night after night. She looked a little pale.

I chose a tight white gown of white satin that buttoned down the back, with a skirt that flared out and rustled. I would wear a rhinestone crown for my hair, to which a veil would be attached.

"Better make it half a dozen veils," I told her, watching her knuckles go white as she gripped her ball point tighter while making out the sales slip. "I might even work out a dance of the seven veils after I strip down."

The girl flushed.

"You English are so staid," I smiled. "I want yelling, foot stamping, whistles and shouts. After all, a girl needs some encouragement."

I thought she might faint, but she rallied despite visions of a husband whistling and clapping and stamping his feet as I shed my gown along with my bridal modesty. I saw her glancing from time to time toward my finger, bare of any engagement ring.

"Now for the goodies," I exclaimed.

"Goo-goo-goodies?"

"Sure, you know—fancy bras, a couple of cute panties with strategic holes cut in them, black nylons—"

"—with a *bridal* gown?"

"Honey, I know what men like."

"Men? I mean, how many—that is. . . ."

I patted her pallid cheek. "Sweetie, I haven't gone through the routine yet. I'm not sure just how I'm going to come on, but I know what makes the best impression." I halted and put my fingertip to my cheek. "You know, I wonder if white wouldn't be better."

"Better than wh-what?"

"Than a black lace bra, silly, with maybe some red ribbons in it. And panties to match. A garterbelt, too, lacey and strong, that'll hold up when I do my bumps and high kicks."

The girl sat down hard. "You're having a bloody lot of

fun at my expense. Come off it, Yank. I won't put up with this nonsense any longer!"

I reached into my handbag, brought out my wallet and waved some five pound notes around. Sight of the money sort of mollified her. She sniffed, as if to say that there were kooks all over, these days, and maybe one or two of them did get married.

Actually, I chose half a dozen sets of underwear. I was not quite certain about my routine. I might find black too bold, maybe the customers would want white as a symbol of virginity about to be ravished.

The things I do for Uncle Sam!

I figured I was on my own. David Anderjanian was stateside. Somebody had to start the ball rolling to find The Satyr. If anybody would know whether he had given the microfilm to Eric Downes, he would.

I had thought of visiting the strip joints in Soho posing as a tourist. But the odds against my being in the right place at the right time—when The Satyr would proposition one of the bump and grind beauties, were too big. If he liked new strippers, I would be one.

At six o'clock I walked into a dimly lighted dressing room of the Off Limits, carrying my prop valise. There were a couple of other skin kin there, a pert redhead with an impressive bosom that shook and quivered like white jello when she moved, a gal with black hair down to her behind, a couple of tired-looking blondes. They glanced up at me, nodded, and went back to doing their faces.

I dropped my bag and grabbed my skirt hem. Up it came until I was all girl in a black lace bra and ditto panties, gun-metal nylons and a red-ribboned, black garterbelt. In the mirror over the nearest dressing table I got a look at my firm white hips stuffed into black lace and nylon. I bent down, saw my breasts half exposed above the tight brassiere.

Then while the other girls gaped in astonishment, I lifted out the bridal gown. I began undoing the satin buttons down the back.

"What's that for?" asked the redhead.

"She thinks she's in a church," said a blonde.

The girls laughed. I scowled.

Holding the gown up before me, posing in the mirror, I

said tartly, "Relax, sweeties. Your star of stars is here."

"She's a Yank, too," muttered the girl with the long black hair. "We ought to send her back where she belongs."

"Don't try it," I warned them softly. "You might get yourselves hurt. I wear the red and white belt in judo, loves."

The British are a brave people. They are also still fighting the American Revolution. The redhead and the girl with the long black hair and a hefty blonde came for me from three different directions, hands up and long red nails showing. If they marked my face or body with those nails, I might not get to do my bashful bride routine. And I must do that little strip bit for dear old L.U.S.T.

I grabbed the blonde with a hand on her left upper arm and right shoulder, kicking her right knee with my left foot in the knee wheel throw. She went down sideways like a sack of meal, screeching with indignation. As my right hand came off her shoulder, I just let it keep on going—into the redhead's throat. Not too hard. Just enough to shut her windpipe for a second or two.

As the redhead doubled up, hands at her throat, I kicked out behind me at the girl with the long black hair. I caught her just above her dimpled navel with the heel of my foot and shoe. The air whooshed from her lungs and she bent over just as the redhead had done.

From the floor where she had sat down hard on her buttocks, the blonde stared up at me. She was wincing with the pain of her bounced bottom.

"First round to you, ducks," she muttered.

"There may not be any more rounds, if you cuties want to help me—and get me out of your hair."

The redhead could not speak yet, neither could the girl with the long black hair. So it was one of the other blondes who asked, "How can we do that, pet?"

"Any of you know The Satyr?"

The redhead could talk enough to say two naughty words. I turned to her, "You don't like him either?"

The blonde put up her hand. I caught it and lifted her to her feet. She muttered, "Promised to marry 'er, 'e did. And run off for h'a floosey down the block."

"But he does come in here?"

The girl with the long black hair smiled nastily. "Soon's

he's heard there's a new girl in our show, he'll be in."

I began to hum, lifting the bridal gown over my head and writhing it down over me. It was a near fit. I'd had to enlarge the bodice, being a female with twin 38s to conceal. I posed before the mirror.

A blonde came up behind me, began to do the buttons. "What's the Satyr to you, ducks?"

"He got my sister pregnant," I lied.

The redhead was gasping more easily now. "And what do you think you're going to do to him?"

I reached into my handbag and produced a large pocket comb. I pressed the comb and out flashed a thin, razor-sharp blade. The girls goggled.

"I'm going to cut his peter off," I smiled.

"You wouldn't *dare*," breathed a blonde

"It'll be him or me, honey," I told her, sliding the blade back into the comb-handle.

They stared at me in utter awe.

I could hear the electric guitars working on the stage through the closed dressing room door. I gave my hips a little shake.

"I hope you girls'll point him out to me."

"We will, ducks," muttered the girl with the long black hair. "I feel a little wicked, knowing what's going to happen to The Satyr tonight."

Blackhair was echoing the thoughts of all the girls. There is an animal savagery in us human beings, and the girls responded to the idea of unmanning The Satyr as bacchantes reacted to the castration rite of the male victims that fell into their clutches at the time of the Bacchanalia.

Redhead was wearing the traditional black satin evening gown, with long black gloves. She lifted the skirt to her navel. Under it she had on a tiny red g-string that looked like the real thing. Slowly, she wriggled her hips, sliding the g-string down. The red was gone and only pale white skin was left.

"Wait'll I do *my* act, girls. I'll shake 'em up for you," she giggled.

She swung around and waggled her buttocks at us. Blackhair muttered, "Maybe I'll vary my own routine, ducks." She gave me a funny look.

Redhead ran out of the room. I went after her, to get

an idea of what the audience was like and to catch a performer's eye view of the stage.

The music was low and rhythmic. It ground deep inside your flesh and made you want to growl at a man. The pert redhead sauntered out onto the boards, hips jouncing, flashing white teeth at the boys around the tables. The house was half empty.

But the men sat up with sudden interest as Red turned her back to them and flipped her skirt up to her head. I got a side look at shapely white legs, the curve of soft buttocks, her belly-bulge as she bent. Somebody whistled. She was shaking them up, all right.

The skirt came down and now she began her regular routine, walking back and forth, peeling off her long black gloves. The bit demanded that she tease them before getting down to business but Red was having none of that, this night. As she sauntered toward me, she winked with one of her false-eyelashed, masked eyes.

The strip tease began as an art form when Kila the cave girl learned that her man Mogok enjoyed seeing her take off her sabretooth tiger-skin nice and slowly, maybe even while walking back and forth past a cooking fire. The rest of the world was quick to pick it up. Susannah unwittingly did a strip for the elders, and in the days when Rome was the only world power, the girls from Gades were renowned for the manner in which they waggled their hips and buttocks. The Romans had a word for this early bump and grind, they called it *cassare*.

The climax of this Gadean dance was the movement by which the women sank down onto the floor, thighs spread in a manner guaranteed even to excite Pelias (whoever he was), as the Roman writer Martial has pointed out. A lot of our modern ecdysiasts use this same method of finishing up a performance. So what else is new?

The erotic ritual dances of Africa employ a form of strip tease by both men and women dancing with each other, but here the only article of clothing to be removed is the *futeh*, the loincloth. And when this is done, the dance is done, the dance is mighty close to its climax, no pun intended. In the Middle East and North Africa coffee houses and hashish parlors, these dances, or modifications of them, are still being done.

Essentially, the strip tease and its subsequent bump and grind, is a mating dance. By displaying her nakedness to a man, a woman wants him to desire her and to do something about it. In the more savage communities, this is understood and acted upon. In our civilized areas, the strip does indeed, become just a tease.

Right in front of me Red put a hand onto her bosom and scooped out her left breast, then her right. She had good knockers, they were big and full, with tinted nipples. Her action was hidden from the audience by a stage prop.

She backed onto the stage, hips shaking. As she went, her hands were lifting up her skirts. In the middle of the stage she whirled, breasts bared and shaking, arms extended outward. And she started to shimmy.

I glanced at the audience. It seemed larger.

A voice behind me whispered, "The word's going up and down the street. There'll be a big crowd for you, watch and see."

I turned. Blackhair was standing at my elbow, dressed as a man in evening clothes, white tie and tails, with her glossy black hair hidden under a high hat. I guess I must have showed my surprise, because she giggled and leaned closer to whisper in my ear.

"You see before you your lovin' bridegroom, ducks. Are you game for it? We'll have to ad lib, but we can think of something naughty, the two of us."

I nodded and turned back to the stage.

Red was sliding her shoulder straps down, still shimmying. Her breasts were flying all over the place like puddings in a windstorm. There were voices raised, now and then, and a great scurrying of feet as waiters with trays piled high with bitters and whiskey moved in between the tables. The audience had more than doubled.

The black satin evening gown went down around her hips as the redhead went on shaking. She gave it a nudge with her thumbs and eased it past her hourglass hips. All she had on now were her shoes and a necklace of cheap black beads.

She ground her hips, she sucked in her belly, she shot her hips like a machine gone mad. Back and forth and from side to side. Her breasts bounced, her pale thighs rippled,

her buttocks jiggled crazily. She was one bare bouncing babe.

The clapping began in a dark corner and spread across the room. Red was ape for applause this night. She even did a couple of high kicks before she ran off and into my arms.

The stage lights dimmed. A prop slid down that showed a bedroom and a big bed painted on the drop. A table and a chair were pushed onto the dais by a stagehand. The electric guitars went into The Wedding March.

I slithered onstage. A howl of anticipation went up at sight of my wedding gown. I had my hands to my cheeks, I pretended embarrassment. I turned and held my hands out, palms up, as if to ward off a too eager bridegroom. The crowd loved it. Feet began to stamp as my English cousins lost some of their reserve.

I turned my back and started unfastening the white satin buttons. The backflaps of the gown fell open, showing the band of my brassiere. Holding my dress to my bosom, I turned my head as if fearful, toward the wing where Blackhair was waiting.

She stepped onto the stage, almost shrinking at the sight of me. She was a good mime, was Blackhair. I knew instantly that "he" was a bashful bridegroom, even more terrified than "his" bride. The crowd knew it too, and roared with laughter.

I put my hand over my open mouth, pretending dismay. As soon as I saw how Blackhair was acting, I removed it to crook a finger at her. She shook her head. The crowd yelped with delight.

I pointed to the floor before me. My bridegroom still hung back, so I raised the hem of my white bridal gown and putting a foot on the edge of the chair, began to smooth my gun-metal stocking up my leg.

My bridegroom took a step forward.

I smiled at "him." I let the bodice drop so that the upper swells of my breasts were exposed. Blackhair gawked, mouth opening. A tongue came out to slide across "his" lips. I turned my back so my bridegroom could not see me, but the audience could, as I slid down the shoulders of my bridal gown and gripping the wired cups of the bra, lowered them so my breasts protruded.

Feet began to stamp. The contrast of the modest bridal gown, with sleeves buttoned down to the wrists and with a long skirt that hid even my shoes, to the sight of my exposed nipples, was too much.

I whirled and gave my bridegroom the benefit of my girl-girl goodies. The girl in the white tie and tails took two steps forward and the audience guffawed. I shook my breasts. Blackhair took another step.

I crooked my finger at "him," but all I got was another headshake. I looked at the audience, lifted my eyebrows and spread my hands. The boys shouted indecent encouragement.

I do not know how many brides do a strip tease for their bridegrooms before or on their wedding night. There are a lot of odd marriage customs all across this earth of ours, and even stranger courtships. In *Utopia*, Sir Thomas More suggested that a man and a woman remove their clothes before one another, that they might not buy the proverbial pig in a poke during the wedding ceremony. In India, a poor father takes his nubile daughter to the marketplace and there strips her down, showing off her charms to the assembled crowd in the hope of finding a man so smitten by her breasts, legs, belly and buttocks that he will make her his wife.

The Puritans bundled, in which a man and his girl went to bed together with only a board standing on end between them, the idea being that since the high jump had not been invented, the ardent youth would be unable to denude his intended before the marriage vows were exchanged. In Sweden this custom is called *frieri*, in the Black Forest region of Germany, *probenachte*, in the land of the dike and wooden shoe, *queesteen*.

These little trial marriages are by no means unique. They were known as far back as medieval days, when they were termed "handfasting." The Eskimos, the Tibetans, in ancient Arabia or almost any country you can name, the young man and his wife-to-be lived together for a period—usually a year—at the end of which time they decided to get married or to split up, and nobody thought less of the girl for the experience.

In a sense then, I was courting my groom as I walked into the stripper's strut, hips wagging and breasts joggling.

My fingers went to the rest of the buttons while I stalked back and forth. I undid the sleeves, I let the gown drop to my middle. My bridegroom covered "his" face with "his" hands. But the first two fingers of each hand widened so "he" could watch me.

I pushed the gown past my hips, and stepped out of it. Facing my bridegroom, I hooked thumbs in my black lace panties. The crowd shouted and stamped its feet. I started pushing down the sheer panties below my buttocks.

When I took my hands away and bent over to pick up my evening gown, the boys in the Off Limits got a real eyeful. I carried the evening gown across my arm toward the table, letting my high heels hit the floor hard so my buttock cheeks would quiver.

As I passed my bridegroom, Blackhair breathed, "He's here."

I kept right on going, not betraying the sudden thrill that rippled down my spine. The word had been passed up and down the street about the new act at the Off Limits. The Satyr was in the audience. I was hoping he would send a card into the dressing room, inviting me out for a late supper.

But first, the show must go on.

I walked back past my bridegroom, hands behind my back and unsnapping the bra hooks. The black garment fell away. I breast-bounced close to Blackhair and tossed my brassiere. Blackhair caught it.

"Where?" I whispered.

My bridegroom stepped close, putting "his" arms about me from behind. I made a moué with my lips, opening my eyes wide so the audience could see I was a little shook by my suddenly amorous husband.

My bridegroom kissed my neck even as "he" whispered, "Third table from the left, in evening clothes. Blond hair, kind of wavy."

Hands caught my breasts from underneath, lifted and shook them a little. The crowd bellowed, every eye riveted on my jumping nipples. My own eyes darted to the third table from the left.

The Satyr was easy to pick out. He was a big man, broad across the shoulders, with blonde wavy hair and real good

looks. No wonder he got so many strippers to go out with him. He was a smasher, as our British cousins say.

I gave him a great big smile.

Never taking my eyes from his, I turned in Blackhair's embrace, put my arms about "his" shoulders, and gave my husband a great big kiss. Blackhair gave the kiss back to me, lips open and tongue working. I never hesitated. As if she were my real bridegroom, I snuggled my belly up to her, felt her soft palms move down my back to cup my exposed behind.

Glued together like that, we writhed toward the painted bed on the drop. Just before we reached it, the lights went out.

The audience groaned out loud.

Then the applause erupted.

CHAPTER TWO

His card was waiting in the dressing room even before I got there. Blackhair and I had to push our way through the girls, listening to their praise, thanking them, taking the back pats and the arm squeezes as tributes to our ad lib act.

The tiny white card was propped up in front of a bottle of nail polish. The name read: Herbert Ahearn. On the back was scratched in small handwriting, See me after the show, love. Table 23. H.A.

Blackhair was giggling, peeping over my shoulder. "You did it, ducks. Worked like a charm, it did." Her palm patted my bare fanny. "Almost wish I was going with you."

I dropped my bridal finery, reached for my street clothes. I was out to make a man, to get him in the palm of my hand, so to speak. I would wear no brassiere, no panties,

just the garterbelt and stockings in which I'd made my exit from the stage. If I shook a little too much, so much the better. Herbert might have to be weak from want before he would tell me where I could find that microfilm.

And so my mini-skirted, maxi-breasted body trotted out to table 23 while one of the blondes was beginning her bumps. The audience had eyes only for the girl on the stage, nobody paid any heed to me until I tapped Herbert Ahearn on the shoulder.

"Oh, hi, love. Here, take my chair," he said.

He stood up, drooling like a hungry bear at sight of a honeycomb. I smiled, nodded, and slipped onto the warm chairbottom he'd vacated.

"I can't stay long, I have another act to do at nine," I told him.

"I know, ducks, I know. And I'll be here, drinking you in. And again at eleven." His hand was on my shoulder, stroking it gently through the thin cotton print.

His fingers were gentle, there was no pawing, no rough stuff, just the slow feathering of fingertips, the silent promise that he would make me happy. I had agreed to keep a date with him. He was a lover boy, one of those Lotharios who honestly enjoy a woman, in more ways than one.

To my surprise, my body reacted quite honestly to his touch. My nipples jumped up at attention, long and rigid, my middle began to moisten. I had come prepared not to like Herbert Ahearn. To suffer through our date. Maybe I was going to get an unexpected bonus because I was a good secret agent.

We made small talk over his pint of bitters.

The Off Limits was filling to bursting as more and more men—some of them had dates with them—came crowding onto its bare wooden flooring. The barmaids were kept hopping, the beerpulls and barrel spigots were being worn to a polished smoothness by constant turning. Business was undergoing a population explosion.

I got up when I saw Blackhair waving at me from the wings. Time for our next act. I made my excuses, told Herbert I'd meet him after my final performance, a little before midnight, and started for the door.

I ran a gauntlet of hands, palms and fingers for the next

ten yards. One hand patted my jiggling buttocks, another slipped up my inner thigh to the point of no departure. I squeezed my thighs, patted a bald head with my palm and wriggled free to the accompaniment of cheers and whistles. A forefinger and a thumb took my behind flesh gently in their grip and pinched. Not hard, just right. Ah, I thought, a Latin lover. A girl gets to be able to tell, after a while.

I made it to the door and slipped through. Blackhair was waiting for me. "Well, come on, love. It's almost time."

What we had ad libbed at the seven o'clock show we polished at the nine, and perfected at the eleven p.m. performance. I must say, we brought down the house, especially since, at the last show, I stripped the sultry Blackhair, playing the part of the bashful bridegroom to perfection, down to her shaven buff. We threw in a hug and a squeeze at the end that had feet stamping and voices bellying.

Pressed up against the soft nakedness of the girl with the long black hair, ragged chills ran down my spine. She was a girl, I was a girl, and sometimes the twain shall meet, but not this night. I had a date with Herbert Ahearn.

Still, feeling her breasts mashed to mine, feeling her bump against me a second before I ground my hips against her, was doing things to my amorous propensities. Out of sight of the audience, I gave her soft behind a gentle squeeze and heard a gasp, deep down in her throat.

Herbert was waiting near the street door as I pushed through the crowd. Under my mini-skirt and Anne Rubin sweater I was wearing a body stocking—the type that runs from the toes up to the navel, and a bra that had holes cut in the cups so my girl-girl breasts could poke through. My behind twitched and my breasts bounced a little loosely as I made my way toward the Satyr.

His eyes glistened when he saw my nipples standing up under the sweater, and the way they moved around. His lips pursed in a soundless whistle.

"I was going to catch the 127 bus, love," he breathed, grabbing my arm, "but I think I can afford a taxi. Taxi's faster—and I'm in no mood to wait around."

"Flatterer," I smiled.

There are taxis all over the place in London. In a few

minutes there was black leather under my behind and a hand on my sweater bumps as The Satyr drew me in against him. His lips dove for my mouth.

He kissed with open lips and probing tongue. His hand on my breast was part of his twin attack. A forefinger and thumb caught my left nipple and rotated it gently, then switched over to my right. I didn't exactly need this added stimulation—Blackhair had done a good job on the stage—but it was so nice I made purring sounds in my throat.

Then he let go of my mouth to forage around on my throat, kissing and nibbling. His hand dropped a few degrees to my stockinged knees, began sliding up my inner thigh.

"I'm going to teach you lovely things, love," he whispered.

"Like the pygiac mysteries?" I giggled.

He drew his head away to stare at me.

"You know about them?"

I giggled, "I do manage to get around, here and there. Besides, I read a lot, honey. Those old Romans had some good ideas, but so did the Arabs."

"The *hannechi*, for instance," he laughed softly.

"Oh, everybody does it that way," I protested. "Why don't we start off with the position of the *quince*? This makes it last a little longer. Right at the start we'll both be quite excited, so a rest between thrusts is always a good idea."

"Oh, you mean the blacksmith's embrace?"

I patted his lap, finding him very excited. "Mmm-hmmm. Just as the blacksmith takes a glowing iron from the fire and plunges it into cold water, again and again—why, darling!"

He had caught my hand, yanked it away. Herbert was breathing hard, and his face was flushed.

"Let's go easy," he breathed.

"All right. I'll talk about something calming—like a microfilm Eric Downes is supposed to have had—and hasn't."

There was a dark silence. Herbie-boy calmed down, all right. He looked at me, and there was fright back there

behind his eyes. He swallowed three times before he could say, "What do you know about good old Eric?"

"I know he won't grow any older. He's dead."

"Ahhh!"

"I was to meet him at his manor house and get the film from him. When I got there, he was lying on his study floor—and the microfilm was nowhere about. The study door was locked from the inside, the windows were bolted from the inside."

"He didn't."

"Didn't what?"

"Shoot himself. Not old Eric. Loved life too much. I take it you're from L.U.S.T.?"

"And most anxious to lay my perfumed fingertips on that film, Herbie. Did you give it to him, by the way?"

"I did."

"Then where is it?"

"When I turn it over to my purchaser, it's out of my hands, pet. Now let's forget that microfilm and go back to talking about love."

"Herbie, I want that microfilm."

The taxi was slowing. Herbert Ahearn was opening the taxi door. We were in Mornington Crescent before a row of joined houses done in Georgian style. Some of these old homes were still owned by well-to-do families, some of them had been converted into apartments. The Satyr had an apartment on the second floor of a house with white shutters and blue window frames.

His hand on my behind boosted me up the few steps to the porch door. I went cheerfully enough. Blackhair had done a good job on my emotions. I was more than ready for fun and games.

But even more important than my pleasure was my patriotic duty. I just had to lay my hands on that microfilm. But not before I put my hand on something else. I reached behind me and The Satyr gasped.

His nickname had been honestly given. The Satyrs were forest deities out of Greek folklore, and they were reputed to boast members to rival any stallion. If he had animal legs and hooved feet, maybe even a pair of horns on his forehead, Herbert Ahearn could have been a real satyr.

"Wowie," I complimented.

He chuckled, his hand sliding under my mini-skirt and along an inner thigh. I came to a dead stop on the stairs leading up to the second floor and did a little bump and grind on the fingers that were growing all too familiar.

Then I disengaged myself and took the steps two at a time. I had a plan in mind. Herbie would tell me what I wanted to know, and very soon.

He was right at my heels, panting so loudly I could hear him. He had his key out and pushed it in the lock. The door swung open noiselessly.

I inched past him and into the small lobby of his apartment. I came to a dead stop. The walls were striped black and white, there was a black carpet underfoot and the ceiling was a chalk white, resembling a little dome.

But what caught my baby blues was the sight of two shadow boxes, one on either side of the archway, lined with black velvet and bordered by gold frames. Each shadow-box held a set of figurines, carved from wood and painted down to the minutest detail.

The frame to the left of the archway into the darkened living room held a naked man seated on a garden bench. A nude woman was straddling his thighs, her head resting on his shoulder. She was facing outward from the frame, belly sucked in, ribs showing, her long black hair spilling over her pink shoulders. The man held her breasts and his face was a study in carnal pleasure. His eyes were bulging and his mouth was open. You could almost see him shuddering.

To the right of the archway the shadow-box showed the same couple, but now the woman had her back turned to the viewer so that her pinkly painted buttocks seemed poised for a downward stroke. It was very realistic, it was like peeping in a window at a real man and a real woman. It sent my blood pressure soaring.

I wheeled on Herbie, who had closed the door behind him. My hands went unerringly to their goal. The Satyr grunted, his hips lurched. His belt was open and his neatly pressed Saville Row trousers were down about his ankles with his shorts.

I drew back when all my inclinations were to go forward.

Herbie was very much alive. He actually trembled there before my eyes.

"You too," he moaned. "Get naked!"

I lifted my mini-skirt to my hips. My body stocking was very sheer, being black nylon. Herbie stared at my blonde puff and licked his lips.

My hands paused with the mini-skirt up to my navel. "Herbie dear, about that microfilm—"

"Not now. Have a heart, Yank. Get nice and bare for me. I'm in a perfect state, I am."

"I know, Herbie. I can see. But about that microfilm. You understand, I've got to lay my pretty little fingertips on it and—"

"Put those fingertips somewhere else, sweets."

I pouted, "Darling, don't rush."

He rasped, "I haven't the faintest idea where that thrice-damned microfilm is. But I bloody well know I turned it over to Eric, some days back. Maybe whoever it was who shot him—took it."

I turned around and bent over, letting The Satyr have a real good look at my nyloned buttocks. I heard him groan and then he took a step forward. I almost didn't get away.

I twisted free and ran into the darkened living room. I took only a couple of steps because I wanted Herbert Ahearn to see my shapely legs, all the way from my fifty dollar pumps to my 35 inch hips and what lay in between.

"I've already told you the door was locked and the study windows bolted. The door key was still in the lock. Eric wouldn't have kept the microfilm very far out of reach."

The Satyr was shaking in his need.

"Damn you," he whispered. "You're a bloody teaser."

"Not really. I'm just a L.U.S.T. lady on her lonesome, here in London Town. Go on, Herbie-werbie."

"There are ways of hocussing keys and locks," he groaned.

"In books, yes. Just believe me, if Eric had the film, it's still there in his study. Unless it was stolen from him and in a fit of despair, he killed himself."

I thought a minute, as best I could with The Satyr staring me almost in the face. I shook my head and did a bump and grind. "No. Judging from the position of the bullet in

the back of his head and the place where the pistol ended on his desk, he just couldn't have shot himself.

"But I gave him the film," he moaned.

"Then tell me the name of your contact, honey," I wheedled, "the one who gave the microfilm to you."

There was a little pause. Herbert Ahearn eyed me from my toes to my blonde head. He smiled wryly and shook his head. "Ducks, that name will cost you."

I laughed and bumped my hips at him.

It was his turn to laugh. "I don't mean that. I mean hard cash. Say, two hundred pounds."

"You're putting me on."

"Pet, I'm in this game for the pence I can make out of it, no other reason. I'm not like Eric, who was a perishing patriot. Not Ahearn. I ask cash on the line before I deliver the goods."

I could make Herbie-werbie tell me. I knew ways.

I unzipped and peeled off my mini-skirt and tossed it in his face. While he was busy catching it, I yanked up my sweater. My breasts shook up and down in the punched-out holes of my brassiere, my nipples large and hard from all our play.

The Satyr gasped, "Ducks, you're a knock-out."

"You mean knockers out, don't you?" I giggled, shimmying my shoulders so that my white girl-treasures swayed from side to side.

I was still wearing my black nylon panti-hose as I moved to where The Satyr was standing in the doorway. I said softly, "I have something a lot better than money."

I squatted down. I let my knees go wide in the position the Shiek Nefwazi calls the *mokorfcuss*, much in the manner of a frog at rest. Herbert was staring down between my nyloned thighs and making a gurgling sound deep in his throat. I smiled up at him. I hooked my hands under my knees and rolled over onto my back, into the *el modcfeda* posture.

"Herbert?" I whispered.

He dropped toward me, intent only on his clamoring carnality. He was fast but my right leg was a lot faster. I got a foot in his belly, I got a grip on his shirt with both hands and heaved with arms and leg.

He was in the perfect position for the stomach throw, the *tomoe nage*. He yelled as he went backward high above my head. I let go of him and he went on without any help, to come crashing down on his back on the living room rug.

I swung about and lay on my front, looking at him. Herbert groaned and lifted his head.

I said, "Sweetie, don't be difficult. I know all kinds of holds, erotic and otherwise. You really aren't going to be a naughty boy, now are you?"

He rolled his head back and forth on the carpet, muttering, "My God, woman. You could have killed me. Broken my spine or something."

"These are the risks you take, Herbie-werbie. Now let's start all over. You want something of mine, I want a little information. Shall we exchange?"

"Love to, pet—provided I get those two hundred pounds."

Herbie had a one-track mind.

I did a little mental calculation. The pound is worth two dollars and eighty cents in American money on the world market. The Satyr wanted close to six hundred dollars for telling me a name.

I had arrived in England with a little more than five century notes in my handbag wallet, for spending money. Most of it was in travellers checks. I had cashed one hundred dollars in the Barclay Bank at London Airport when I'd come out of Customs. No matter how I stretched it, five hundred dollars did not add up to six hundred.

"Herbie," I wheedled, coming up on my hands and knees.

I moved forward, right over The Satyr until my face was poised above his straining self and he was glaring up at the vee of my widespread thighs. In the ancient world, the Phoenicians were noted for that bit of erotic practice for which the French are famed—or defamed—today, and to "go to Phoenicia," or "to Liguria" in some instances, was to vary the norm of loving couples.

"Darling," I breathed, putting my hand on him and scratching lightly with my long, red fingernails.

He groaned and shivered, his hands ran up my outer thighs, but he whispered, "Two hundred pounds, pet. And this too, of course. But the money first."

"Damn you," I whimpered. I am flesh and blood, too.

I came close to saying the hell with the microfilm. After all, I was on vacation and you do the things you like to do when you're away from it all. But I had been trained by experts. I rolled over onto my back and got to my feet.

Standing over The Satyr, I snarled, "I don't have six hundred dollars."

My breasts were like white rocks standing out from my bra holes. I wanted to drop down on the satyriest part of The Satyr, I wanted to have a bash with him. I would go to Phoenicia and a couple of other ancient ports of call.

But.

I swallowed and licked my lips. *Retro me, Sathanus*. Back where you belong, Satan, I told myself.

"Herbert, dear, I understand there are a lot of private gaming places in mad, mod, bad London where a girl can bet a chip or two or three on blackjack or the turn of a roulette wheel or the flip of a card in poker, to say nothing of shooting craps."

"Lots, pet," he breathed.

"Can you get me in one? Tonight?"

"Want to gamble, do you?"

"Only enough to win two hundred pounds."

"Ahh, to be sure. Well, now. Let me think. Where'd be the right place to take a peach like you. Crockford's? Very posh and plush. You might like Crockford's. The Clermont Club? That's too exclusive. And besides—I'm not a member. The new Playboy Club on Park Lane? There are dozens of these clubs, pet—all tony and very swell."

I nudged him with a foot. "Then pick one."

He opened his eyes. "Going to risk your own money, are you? Just to pay old Herbert? I must say, you're a proper darling. It's good to do business with you."

He reached out and caught my ankle.

"The club, Herbert," I warned.

"The Bully Sawyer," he exclaimed suddenly. "It's neat, quiet, and reasonably efficient. I get a percentage of the losses, too."

"My losses, you mean?"

"If you lose, which I hope you don't. Two hundred

pounds is a lot more than a percentage of five hundred dollars, assuming you lose your whole bankroll."

I reached for my mini-skirt. "Better get dressed," I told him, nudging him with one of my fifty dollar Anne Le-vines.

"Give me a chance, woman," he sighed.

I walked out into the hall, closing the door behind me. I needed a breather myself, I found. So I breathed for a while, until I was nice and calm.

The Bully Sawyer is on Curzon Street, in a Georgian style house that had been a family home at one time. It has been remade into a private casino where you can drink and gamble to your heart's content. The rather strict British drinking regulations do not apply to private clubs.

We trotted up the steps. Herbert rang a bell and a girl in opera-length hose, a mini-skirt and a frilly blouse welcomed us with a big smile and a nod of her flaxen head.

"Evening, Mister Ahearn," she giggled.

"Dolly, how's the action tonight?"

"A bit slow so far. But it'll pick up."

"Pick up? It's after midnight," I pointed out.

Polly smiled. "There's a planeload of colonists due in about three o'clock. There's taxis waiting for them at the airport, to bring them directly here. They'll play through the whole day and go home tomorrow evening."

I thought that our British cousins might call us colonists, but that they took our money when and how they could. And bloody glad to get it, they were. Well, I was one colonist who wasn't going to hand over any of her hard-earned George Washingtons to swell the British pound, except maybe for the winning pot percentage at the poker table.

"Seat me, Herbert," I smiled.

We followed the shapely netted legs of the hall girl up a staircase and into a large room fitted out with gaming tables and small chairs, a thick carpet and mirrored walls. Glass chandeliers flooded the room with light. About three dozen men and women were grouped about the craps table, the blackjack counter and a roulette board and wheel.

"No poker?" I asked, looking about the room.

"Back room, ma'am," smiled Polly, arching her eyebrows slightly. I gathered that few women played poker at the Bully Sawyer.

I zeroed in on the open double doors that led into the back room. A six-sided poker table had been set up under a green glass chandelier. There was a quiet atmosphere here—wood-paneled walls, dim lights except for the chandelier that hung directly above the green baize table with its slotted sections for chips and cards, and absolutely no mirrors—which was in stark contrast to the larger, outer room.

Five men were seated about the table. Two of them looked up as I entered. They were the youngest men there, both in their middle thirties.

I smiled at one of them. He was dark, with black hair and bright black eyes. "Room for one more?" I asked.

The remaining three players glanced up. Two of them were typical Britishers with walrus moustaches and bald pates, the other was a slim man with a hatchet face. He sniffed coldly at sight of my bulging bodice.

"Women have no business at a poker table," he muttered. "They make very poor players."

"There's no such thing as female money," I said softly, taking out a roll of bills. As Polly hurried forward, I told her I wanted a hundred pounds worth of chips. She nodded and hurried off, satin rump twitching.

I sat down at an empty side. "I take it it's all right, gentlemen?" I asked, looking from one face to the other, trying to gauge each man. Poker is little more than a game of luck and character. If you know the people you play with, and your luck equals theirs, you should win.

A moustache shrugged. This man wore a plaid sports jacket, the other portly moustache was very red of face. Out of the corner of my eyes, I saw Herbert Ahearn standing in the doorway, watching me. I turned and wiggled my fingers at him. He gave me a long stare, then nodded and moved away as Polly brought my chips.

The dark man was taking cards from an automatic shuffler. He handed them to the blonde young man on his right, who cut them.

"Five and ten pounds limit," the blonde man said, turning to me. "Five to open, ten to raise."

The cards were dealt neatly, deftly. I had a pair of sevens. I dropped, but I went on studying my fellow players. I have found that poker players fall into certain set categories. There is the sucker who draws to inside straights and other assorted bits of nonsense, the gambler who overplays his hand but backs his bluffs with such a big bankroll that he may rob you blind unless he hits a bad streak. Then we have the steady, who plays the way he's named, without fuss and rarely loses a lot, and the streaker, who plays by his emotions.

It took me a dozen hands to get to know my companions. Hatchet face was cold and methodical, the two gentlemen with the walrus moustaches were suckers, really, sitting in with the memory of some past wins to bolster their confidence. My blonde man was a streaker, he got a run of good cards right at the start and he kept throwing ten pound notes out as if they were confetti.

I was afraid of the dark man, in a poker sense. He bet twice on the first dozen deals. Each time he had a full house. I had the feeling that he was setting up a monumental bluff. I stayed for five of those first twelve hands. Once I had a straight, the other four times I went in on two pair. I was doing some setting up on my own, as best I could with the cards I got.

An hour went by. I was out thirty pounds. Dark man was ahead, so was plaid sports jacket. Hatchet face and the two others were falling behind.

The blonde man dealt me three kings, an ace and a trey. I tossed away the ace and trey, called for two cards. One of the two cards was the king of diamonds. My dear old daddy, who taught me to play poker as he taught me to pick a lock, had insisted I develop a poker face.

When I have good cards in my hand, my expression does not vary one iota from when I haven't got a thing. Dark man had opened for five pounds, now he bet ten. The two moustaches dropped, hatchet face stayed, I raised ten.

I knew dark man did not have four aces, I'd thrown one away. And I was willing to risk the odds against his having a straight flush.

The blonde man hesitated, and I knew he was beaten. When a player hesitates on a raised raise, you have him, because it means his hand, while good, is not in the same class with a raised raise combination. Muttering under his breath, he threw in the required twenty pounds.

Dark man raised me ten. Hatchet face wrinkled up his features and threw in his hand. I pushed two tens out onto the green tabletop.

"Again," I smiled.

The blonde swore under his breath and tossed his hand in the discard pile. Dark man did not alter his expression but his eyes touched me slowly, in a long stare. His hand fondled the ten pound chip pile, paused for a bare fraction of a second, and lifted one chip.

"I call," he smiled.

I spread the four kings. Dark man had four tens.

One hundred and forty pounds were in the pot. I had thrown in forty-five of them, so my thirty pound loss was evened out, and I was ahead by sixty-five.

Even more to the point, I had seen dark man back a powerful hand again. My problem was, did he do it as a habit or was he actually setting up a bluff? I had to watch him carefully for a telltale clue.

Oh, there are clues, tiny little nuances of expression or movement, which can tell you a lot about the players. I tried to remember what daddy had told me about people and what they do when they play poker.

I won another pot of about twenty pounds from hatchet face, and a third in a row, of thirty pounds, from red face with the walrus moustache. I must say there were no more snide remarks about women poker players.

Herbert Ahearn looked in once during all this play. He glanced at my face and at the pile of chips in front of me. I noticed that he nodded with something like satisfaction.

Blonde man dealt stud. My hole card was a four. Red face showed a nine on his first up card; hatchet face, a queen. I got a trey, the dealer received the diamond jack. Dark man looked at his hole card a second time, I noticed. His hole card was weak, I told myself to remember, most probably below the jack.

I got a four to go with my trey on the second round. Pair of fours. Then I got a third four. Things were looking up. I began to take an active interest in the other up cards. The moustache boys I forgot; no matter what they received on the last round, they could not beat three fours. Blonde man had a diamond jack, ten and queen, dark man had three aces showing. Hatchet face boasted a pair of queens and a deuce.

Dark man pushed the betting. Ten pounds each time, indicative of a good, strong hand, as if I couldn't see his three bullets. The moustaches dropped out now, folding their cards. Hatchet face hemmed and hawed, then threw in his chip. So did I, followed by Blondie. I figured Blondie and Hatchet face for two pair. He was hoping to get a queen to give him a full house. Blondie might have a flush.

The dealer dropped a ten to the dark man. I was watching his face as the card came to him, and saw a brief flash of exultation touch his features. It was there and gone in a second. Full house, I thought dully—as if things weren't tough enough.

Hatchet face got a six to go with his pair of queens and a deuce. He was out of it. A hand flashed a card on my pile. The heart four.

My heart lurched, but my face never moved. I just went on toying with the pile of five pound chips in the chip slot while I watched the diamond king drop alongside the diamond jack, ten and queen. Unfortunately for my peace of mind, dark man did not show the diamond ace, nor was there any evidence of the diamond nine on the board. Blondie might have himself a straight flush, if either of those pips were his hole card.

But my fair friend gave himself away. He could not avoid the downward quirk of his lips that indicated his disgust. He was thinking, Four diamonds in a row and what might have been a glorious moment is nothing more than a flush. Or maybe it was just a four flush.

Dark man studied me as he tossed out a ten pounder. Hatchet face dropped.

I used reverse psychology. I hesitated for a few brief moments, but far longer than I should (or so I wanted

dark man to think). Then I upped his bet by ten. Bluff, he was thinking, the pretty bitch is trying to bluff me!

Blondie groaned and threw in his cards.

Dark man raised me. I raised him. This went on until there must have been more than three hundred pounds in that pot. I was getting a little frantic by this time. Suppose I were wrong about reading his face and that telltale extra peek at his hole card? Oh, well! How many times can a girl go broke?

Finally dark man smiled at me and asked, "How much money do you have left, ma'am?"

I counted my chips. "Four hundred pounds, give or take a couple. Why?"

He said, "Figure it out exactly. I'll raise by that much—and let's get this damn game over. It's going on four o'clock in the morning and I'm bloody tired."

I pushed my money out after he pushed his in. He spread out his cards. I had guessed right. He showed three aces and two tens.

When I flipped my hole card, I thought he'd faint.

He swallowed, he tried to grin.

"What damn fool said women couldn't play poker?" he muttered and pushed away from the table.

I counted my winnings while the men walked away and left me sitting there in my solitary glory. I had won over fifteen hundred pounds.

Herbert Ahearn came running in. He slowed and whistled soundlessly as his eyes saw the pile of chips. "Lor blimey," he breathed, reverting to the Cockney. "You took 'em!" He sank down in an empty chair. "I never saw so many chips."

I pushed twenty ten pound chips across the table. "For you, love. Two hundred pounds worth of information. Now what's that name?"

He chuckled and shook his head as he scooped up the chips. "Money puts me in a loving mood, ducks. Come on back to the digs with me and I'll break out a magnum all nicely chilled."

"I'm hungry," I complained.

"And ham and eggs, toast done to a golden brown, and

coffee." He added with a chuckle, at sight of my face. "Instant, sweets. Instant coffee, American. You game?"

Well, I was a thousand pounds richer for a few hours of card play. I felt in a good mood. Besides, the excitement of doing three strip acts with Blackhair and all that poker had put a tigress in one Yank.

CHAPTER THREE

I pushed chips around on the poker table while I smiled up at Herbert Ahearn who was licking his lips while his eyes met mine. There was a devil deep inside his eyes, a wise devil who knew just where to grab a girl.

"Tell you what I'm gonna do, Herbie-werbie," I giggled. "I'll roll the dice for my fair body. If you win, you get me—and if I win, I get to call the shots. Fair enough?"

"Couldn't be fairer," he nodded. "Come along, then."

I swept out of the poker room with chips overflowing my hands, Herbie trotting at heel. The American tourists were flooding the big gambling room by this time, it was close to dawn and the huge B.O.A.C. Rolls Royce 707 that had brought them here had long since touched down on one of the long strips at London Airport.

There were men in white ties and tails, women in evening gowns, men in Brooks Brothers business suits, girls in pert

mini-skirts by Paraphernalia. Everywhere I heard voices I could recognize, with a New England twang or a Southern drawl or the hard accents of of a native New Yorker. My eyes went to the dice table.

A girl was putting down the dice, her lips quivering.

I shouldered my way beside her. "Honey, this is my lucky night. Here " I pushed three ten pound chips into her hands and reached for the dice.

"My boy friend wants my body in his bed," I laughed. "So we're going to gamble for me. All right if I throw a few?"

"Best three out of four," Herbie muttered in my ear.

The little blonde girl was still staring at me, but her lips had stopped quivering and she winked one of her false-eyelashed lids. "Bail me out, sweetie," she murmured, clattering the chips around in her palm.

The men laughed, the women smiled. They all nodded.

I rattled the dice in my hand, as the boxman called, "The lady takes the dice. Make your bets, please!"

The craps table had a foot-high rail around it. The table floor was green baize, the field with its boxed number, its win or lose bars, its numbered squares neatly framed. There is a changer and a croupier who stand in indented spaces where the high board curves. In American, the croupier is called a stick-man, and the changer is a boxman. It is the duty of the stick-man to rake in the dice after each throw and present them to the next player. The boxman watches the bets, marks the point to be made, gathers in and pays out the losses and the wins.

There is a high board against which the dice must be bounced to fall back onto the table and roll, to prevent players from palming the dice or rolling them off their fingertips. A good diceman can make those little cubes do strange things, without a craps board.

A couple of chips went down on craps, I noted.

I rattled the dice. I hurled them.

The squares hit the board, bounced back onto the field, rolling. One stopped to show a five, the other bumped over and came to rest with five dots up. Five and five make ten. Ten was my point.

I rattled the dice and threw them. Nine. Close, but not close enough. I threw again. A five. A fourth time I sent

the dice banging into the board. One die showed a four, the other a six. Ten.

The girl with the quivery lips giggled. She had backed my play with the three ten pounders I had given her. She stared down at the chips she had won with wide, disbelieving eyes.

Herbie was scowling darkly.

I rattled the dice, waited for the bets to go down—and hurled them. This was my lucky night. I threw a seven.

A dice player wins when, on his first roll, he turns up a seven or an eleven. He loses when he throws a two, a three, or a twelve. On his second toss, if he turns up a four, a five a six, an eight, a nine or a ten, his point is that number which he makes. He must make this point again to win. He gets as many chances to make this point as he needs, unless he rolls a seven, in which event he loses.

Herbie looked as if he were choking to death.

"I need one more, folks," I carolled. "Three out of four will do it. Ride along with me or against me."

I threw the dice and turned up an eight. I threw again and got a four. I threw a third time and showed seven. I lost.

Somebody groaned. The girl with the shivery lips smiled tremulously, still clutching her win chips to the breasts that showed so full against her fuzzy sweater.

"Bet, honey. I feel lucky. Get it all down on eleven."

"You must be j-joking," she breathed.

"Call it intuition, darling," I giggled.

She shook her head, her eyes apologetic. "Sorry, I won back all my losses on your first toss. I just couldn't bear the idea of losing it again."

The bets were down, the boxman told me.

The dice flew out, hit the board, came rolling and bouncing back across the greenfield. A six and a couple of more rolls to the other die and then—a five.

"See, honey?" I smiled.

She looked crestfallen for a moment but her breasts surged up as she took a deep breath. "I don't care. I'm even. I just came along for the ride, anyhow."

Herbie was turning, walking off. I gave the girl an encouraging pat on the back and ran after him. I caught up to him at the door.

"Herbie, wait. I want to cash in my chips."

"Why should I wait?" he grumbled.

"Because I won and—I get to call the shots."

His eyes gleamed suddenly. He perked up and gave me a weak smile. "You mean that, ducks?"

"This is my lucky night," I told him, brushing my breasts against his arm. "I'm betting I've drawn a winner in you."

His palm patted my behind. "You have, sweetie."

I got my money, stuffed it in my purse, then went trotting off with Herbert Ahearn. Once or twice as we ran out onto the street, I stifled a yawn with my fingertips. I'd had a long day. I was getting pooped.

Herbie waved down a taxi.

Inside the cab, Herbie caught me yawning again. He leaned over and said, "Look, pet. I'm no ogre. I like a girl to enjoy her jollies, not suffer through them."

"I do have a winner in you," I nodded.

He chuckled, "So why don't we just pop off for a slumber-bye first? Really sleep, I mean. When we wake up, we'll both feel a lot more like indulging our private lives."

I leaned over, kissed his cheek.

"You won't be sorry, Herbie-werbie," I told him.

I had not seen the living room of the Ahearn pad, though if his lobby were any sample of the room beyond the archway, I was in for pleasant shocks to my erogenous zones. His hand hit a wall switch. Dim lamps blazed up from either side of a wide sofa.

The first thing I saw was a big oil painting above the divan, of a shapely nude woman spread out in an utterly abandoned attitude, legs wide, one black stocking taut, the other loose, with the garter attached to a garterbelt, her only article of clothing. Her breasts were big and heavy. Her hand lay on an upright candle on a small table to her left, her right hand had closed its fingers around a banana she was plucking from a bowl of fruit.

It was not a cheap painting, it was a masterpiece.

I turned my head and saw a grouping of four etchings—later, I learned they had been used to illustrate the forbidden *Nouvel Album Erotique*—which showed two men enjoying the embraces of five (count 'em) unclad females in varying postures and deviations. I stared at the pleasant-ries that were going on, my mouth watering.

"Herbie," I squealed. "Wherever did you get them?"

"In Singapore, years ago. That grouping was shipped from Paris."

"Singapore? Why Singapore?"

"I was born in Singapore. My father was an import-export agent. He was a rather high flyer, my pops. He enjoyed the finer things in life, too. He started gathering up these bits of erotica, here and there. I've been adding to them, off and on."

"Joke, Herbie?"

"What?"

"Adding to them off and on, I mean."

Herbie chuckled and guided me through the archway into the luxuriously furnished living room. There was a thick Turkish carpet underfoot so if you felt like running around on it in your bare feet it would tickle your soles. Some people get stimulated by tickling.

I let my eyes slide across the walls that were so heavily hung with mezzotints and oils, washes and water colors. I studied a print by Zichy in which a woman crouched atop a man's face, baring herself for his lingual adoration, then slid my eyes to an oil painting of a bit of dalliance on a sofa.

Oh, yes. There was a mahogany coffee table that held a copper statue of a woman squatting, offering her femininity for all the world to see, and a huge ceramic ashtray shaped like a flower with two red, widespread lips, that was not quite a flower. Three or four easy chairs (what can they do with chairs, now really?) stood here and there. Twin flowerboxes of black earthenware—on which were painted male and female figures engaged in the delights of the rod—made conversation pieces below the window sills. Thick drapes of an intense scarlet framed the windows.

This was the den of a sybarite, of a man who knew what he liked and surrounded himself with its emblems. My knees were a little weak as I stared at a picture grouping on the west wall displaying one man with one girl, with two girls, with three girls, with four girls. I gazed on wall-shelves which held lifelike statues of little wooden men and women joined in classical love postures. I recognized copies of the works of Rodin, of Epstein.

"You have a fortune here, Herbie," I breathed.

He shrugged. "I'm not married. I make enough money

to indulge myself. Besides, a lot of this collection was brought together by my pops. I've only added a few pieces, really."

I no longer felt tired, I realized.

So I turned in the bedroom doorway and placed my soft belly up against Herbert Ahearn. My arms went around his neck and my hardening breasts to his chest. With open mouth and slowly sliding tongue I kissed him, lazily, sensually.

He moaned a little, deep in his throat, as my thighs twisted against his aroused self. He slid his hands down my back to my jiggley buttocks, cupping and petting them. We were in no hurry, we had all the time in the world. Our tongues touched, sliding together and apart, curling about, as our lips mashed.

I guess I was moaning a little, myself.

"Pet, you can't go to sleep now," he whispered when he could. His hands were scrabbling my mini-skirt up in back so he could run feathery fingertips about the panty part of my body stockings.

"I'm almost afraid to see your—bedroom, Herbie."

His chuckle was soft and deep. He bumped me with his manhood, pushing me back a step. He kissed my lips open, then blew words between them.

"I learned a lot in Singapore, about what a woman likes," he told me in a soft voice that sent creepy chills down my spine. "They have a more realistic approach to life in the hot countries."

A hand went away from my right buttock to touch a wall switch. Blue light glowed, putting a soft radiance across the rather large room. There was a bed, first of all, a great monster of a bed that measured twelve feet by twelve feet. Behind it was a something like a small library-bar-refrigerator in polished walnut, so that this headboard, if I may give it so homely a term, formed a part of the bed itself. The ceiling above the bed was a mirror.

Herbie nudged my behind with his excitement.

"It splits into twin beds for sleeping," he whispered, moving himself lazily. "I can show movies—preferably the stag type—serve a dozen assorted drinks—make a telephone call or even read a book, all without getting off that mattress."

"Herbert Ahearn, you're a genius."

His hand propelled me another ten feet into the room. Its walls were papered in thin white and broad blue stripes. Hung here and there across those stripes were oil paintings and watercolors, etchings and a bas-relief or two, all on the same subject. I paid little attention to the walnut chest of drawers or the chair and small writing desk. Every bedroom has those, more or less.

I tiptoed forward to stare in shocked delight at the art work. A watercolor of two ladies engaged in oral pleasure, an etching of a girl and a dog at which I blinked in sheer reflex action, four lithographs by Dignimont, the creations of Otto Schoff, several surrealist paintings by Wilhelm Freddie, held me mesmerized.

There were works by well-known artists hung frame by frame with other pictures done by unknowns. The Satyr even had a few glossy photographs staring back at you, here and there. They were not just dirty pictures, they were excellent photographs, of and by themselves.

I remembered the ten treats of Venus with which I had indulged Count Guido della Faziola aboard his yacht, before stealing the snapshots in his wall safe. I wanted something a little different with this most interesting man who was known as The Satyr. But how different can you be? I mean, after all, a man and a woman have only so many working parts.

So while I studied the artistry of a Felicien Rops etching, I considered ways and means. I could repeat the Ten Treats, of course, but I would rather try my hand—or more intimate parts—in a different sort of giving. The Nine Niceties of Nina de Rochemont? Mmmm, maybe. I had a whole range of postures to choose from with the Shiek Nefzawi, but I could see The Satyr thinking about them right along with me, and I wanted his attention to be carnal, not cerebral.

Herbert was within whispering distance, being wedged so tightly against my behind, so I whispered. "Are you game to try something new?"

"Just name it, ducks."

The sound of my skirt zipper was loud in the stillness. Thumbs hooked my skirt, pushed it past my 35 inch hips. I wriggled those hips and the skirt went down to my shoes. Herbert raised his hands to my protruding breasts.

"I can't—that is, I don't know what it is," I told him weakly.

Herbert rested his chin on my bare shoulder and stared down at my rigid brown nipples where they jutted boldly from my brassiere holes. He muttered, "You don't make sense."

"I do. Listen! We've both bedded a lot of people in our time, right? Is there any one way you've never done it with a girl?"

"Fraid not, love."

I stamped my foot. My body stocking was sliding down past my buttocks and along my upper thighs under Herbert's gentle fingertips.

"There has to be *some* way one of us hasn't tried."

"Oh. I see what you mean. Darling, do you realize your *kitzler* is quite large?"

"My *kitzler*? Oh, my little man in the boat. Is it, Herbert?"

His forefinger tip moved around and I could not control the sudden jerking of my hips. I stared down between my nipples at his hand. His forefinger and thumb tugged, tweaked and titillated me until my mouth was open and my eyes were squeezed tightly shut.

A woman is most sensitive in her clitoral bud. It is the seat of all her emotions. It wags her as the penis wags the male. It is as sensitive, as alert to sensual arousal as the male member. Unless it plays a part in the coital movements of the female, there is not nearly as much enjoyment for her in the sex act.

Call it *myrton* as did the Greeks, or *columella* as the Romans named it, title it "little pillar" or "twig," it is the most erogenous of all the parts of the female body. Your Italian says it is "the shivery place," the Czech, "the tickler." Through it runs the *corpora cavernosa* nerve which is attached to the vaginal walls, while the clitoral dorsal nerve wends its path through the lower part of the female body to tie in with the common pudendal nerve traveling up the spine. Located at the upper triangle of the vulva, it possesses a glans and foreskin, and is capable of erection.

Some primitive people enlarge the clitoris, to make a woman more beautiful, some actually sever it, to prevent the woman from being a slave to her own passions. I felt

The Satyr was a member of that first group, the way he was carrying on with me, and I began to think I might just float away on him if he didn't cut it out.

My hips went back and forth, they swung lazily in a circle, they ground savagely. My breath was a bellows in the otherwise still room. Never stop, darling! Oh, never stop! I thought, swooning in the delirium he was causing.

While these thoughts were running more or less chaotically through my brain, The Satyr was doing the teaser bit. He had me so molten by this time even my ears were banging away, so that I heard his voice as if from a far distance.

"Very large," he was whispering.

"Stop it, Herbert. You're driving me batty."

"Are you complaining? Most women like me to take my time—not rush into things, so to speak."

"No, I'm not complaining. I love it. It's just that—something neither of us has ever done—seems to me to be . . . nnnnggg!"

This man was too much. He was hell on wheels around a woman. No wonder he got dates with any stripper he set his eyes on! I writhed and twisted and convulsed while he went on with what he was doing to me, quite calmly.

I tried to break free and fell over my body stocking that was down around my ankles. I dropped to my hands and knees, I turned and rolled, fighting the long nylon legs, getting my shoes off and then kicking the hampering stuff away from my ankles.

Herbert stood and watched my scissoring legs and where they met, with interested eyes. To hell with modesty at a time like this, I was thinking. I was panting like a spavined horse.

I whipped around and ran for the big bed. I hit it and bounced. I turned over and jackknifed my legs. "Come on, Herbert. Come on! We've got to try. And the sooner the better."

Between my outstretched thighs I saw The Satyr with what looked like a tiny silver rod, each end of which was set with bristley hairs, in his hand. He had taken it from a drawer and was carefully affixing it right where it would do me the most good. I swallowed, feeling my throat dry up as other parts of me grew more moist.

"Is—is that what I th-think it is?" I gasped.

He grinned, nodding. "An *ampallang*, honey. They use this in the South Seas, to give their women more pleasure. The Dyaks go for this type, I don't know why."

"You you have to be perforated to use one?"

"The way a girl has her earlobes pierced."

I knew that all through history, mankind has studied hard to improve on nature. Why should this area of human life not be so improved? There is the common dildo, shaped like a male membrum, but even that has been perfected in the rin-o-tama balls of Japan, twin globes one of which contains mercury which slides back and forth in use, providing extra sensations upon insertion. The Western world has its electrical vibrators.

The Satyr had been prepared to use the *ampallang* while still a boy, his father being what he was. There are other methods of achieving the same ends, metal rings can be slipped on, or the so-called French tickler may be used to increase the pleasure of the embrace. Man has never really been satisfied with anything in his world, I guess. Perhaps he searches for a lost divinity.

He came toward me on the run. I could not take my eyes from the artificialia that made him seem like a man from Mars. Or more appropriately --Venus.

He resembled a Green Bay fullback lunging for the line. He left the carpet about five feet from the bed and sailed through the air. His left arm was stretched out, fingers spread wide to break his fall. His other hand was occupied in a different form of aiming.

He thudded onto me. And into me.

I screamed when I felt that driving thrust. My body skidded back two feet. I started flowing around him even as my arms and legs caught hold of him. The *ampallang* was scratching away until I thought I might lose my mind. I went on screaming.

"Ever had that?" he managed to gasp.

I rolled him over, he rolled me over. We rolled each other back and forth, our hips frantic in their pounding madness. The breath sobbing in our throats, my legs cramped where they held his middle. There was nothing but sensation, no world beyond the boundaries of our flesh.

A warning rumbled inside me, advance guard of a com-

ing avalanche. It was a gathering knot, a blazing white ball that rushed and tumbled headlong, growing, always growing. It filled my body. It hung a moment: bloated, swollen, massive.

Then—

"Ahhh, God!" I screamed.

I convulsed. My teeth bit into flesh. My nails raked red furrows down a male back. My heels drummed the bed-sheet. My middle was a casing going crazy with a piston. I screamed and screamed until finally I went limp. I had been on an hour-long journey in the land of Ecstasy. The Satyr fell off me like a straw man. He had been unbelievable.

We slept.

It had been a real long day for yours truly. I was utterly exhausted. I lay there like a dead girl with my arms stretched out, my legs like ten-ton weights. My eyelids were leaden. I didn't even dream.

The Satyr was gone when my blued eyelids lifted but I could hear the shower water falling. I moved my head back and forth. I let my eyes close slowly.

I sat bolt upright in bed.

"Herbert!" I screeched.

I hopped out of bed and ran for the bathroom. I flung open the door, seeing The Satyr behind a wall of water and steam.

"Herbert, what's the name?"

"Eh? What's that, ducks?"

"The name, the name! The man who gave you the microfilm. What's his name?"

"Oh! Say, we never did get around to that, did we? Oh well—you've been a good girl. No reason why I should hold out on you any longer. The name's Thom Morris. Bit of an odd one. Secretive. I don't know too much about Thom. Gives me a ring on the telly every so often. Only way we meet is when I get a phone call telling me the where and when."

I digested that, fuming. "You mean to tell me I can't get in touch with him until he calls you?"

"That's about it, pet."

I would have kicked the bathroom tile except that my

feet were as bare as the rest of me. I glowered at The Satyr soaping his hide inside those falling waters and suddenly I felt all grimey.

I reached in, grabbed his arm, and pulled him out. I slithered in under the shower waters and snatched the lathery soap from his hand. "Sorry, sweetie. I'm a mite dirty myself."

"But I always spend half an hour in the shower," he protested. "My day isn't complete until I do." He eyed me a moment from my red toenails to my wetly dripping blonde hair, then muttered, "Maybe we could share it, ducks?"

"Shower, *sí*. Sex, *non*!" I told him.

"There are a lot of things we didn't get to try, last night," he reminded me, stepping into the small cubicle.

We could scarcely help brushing against each other. The Satyr came to life and stood grinning at me, quite pleased with himself. I ignored him as best I could, but a thigh or a soft buttock nudged him every so often until I started breathing a little funny.

The Satyr has the instincts of a true huntsman. His palms were wet and soapy and he slid them up and all around my rather heavy breasts as they dangled while I soaped my calves. He caught my elongated nipples and squeezed them.

"Damn you, Herbert!"

"Yeah. Feels real good, doesn't it?"

"I don't have any time for playing around."

It damn near killed me, but I pushed him away. I set great store by my love life, but I did have a job to do for L.U.S.T.

"Maybe some other time, sweetie. Not now," I smiled.

He scowled. "I could get you to forget your duty to Uncle Sam, you know."

"Maybe you could, at that. But there's always tomorrow or the next day. I'll be back to see you one of these foggy London nights, pet." I giggled, "I may not even phone you. Sometimes three isn't the proverbial crowd."

The Satyr chuckled, thinking exciting thoughts.

Inside half an hour I was dressed and in a taxi heading toward my base of operations, Grosvenor House in Mayfair. It is a real plush place, the Grosvenor House, and it suited me to perfection.

Five minutes after I walked in the entrance on Park

Lane, I had David Anderjanian on the phone. I clued him in on the more pertinent facts, including my one-night stand as a stripper in Soho.

"And is he?" David wanted to know.

"Is who what, darling?" I hedged.

"Come off it, Oh Oh Sex! Or have you just? Is the Satyr worthy of the name?"

"Why, David! Whatever do you mean?"

"You know what I mean," he growled. "All right, I gather it's pretty bad over there. Eric Downes is dead, the microfilm is missing, the only man who can give us a hint of where the microfilm came from is a will-o'-the-wisp. I'm coming over."

"Ooooooh, David—when?"

"First plane I can take."

"I'll be waiting for you with open arms."

"Like hell you will. Trot those delectable legs of yours down to Somerset and find that microfilm. Eric got it, he hid it, he was killed. Judging by the locked door and bolted window, whoever did him in couldn't get in to do his own searching. So you go down there and find it."

Then he hung up on me, the crud.

CHAPTER FOUR

Here we go again, I thought, turning my rented Austin Healey into the tree-bordered drive to the Downes manor house. I was going to hunt for that cursed microfilm all over again.

The weather did nothing to cheer me up. It was raw and drizzling, and visibility was rather limited. I kept thinking The Satyr and regretting my red-hot patriotism that had made me push him away in the shower. I gritted my teeth.

Some vacation!

I braked the car and ran for the front door, hoping it wasn't locked. It was opened to the touch of my hand on the knob. I walked down the hall.

The study door was closed. I felt a queasiness in my stomach, hoping the authorities had taken poor Eric away for burial. I opened the door and gave a sigh of relief. There was no dead body lying on the rug.

Instead, three very much alive bodies were turning to stare at me. The bodies belonged to big, husky men, Slavic types with blonde hair and high cheekbones. They looked very muscular. They had turned the study upside down, so that it was really quite a mess.

These men were H.A.T.E.

I turned on a spike heel and started my run to freedom. I got halfway down the long hall when a hand grabbed my shoulder. I reached back for the hand, grabbing its wrist with both hands, then bent over suddenly.

One of the Slavic types went up into the air, upside-down, and hung a moment before he fell. I was stepping around his falling body when a second blonde rammed into the backs of my legs. I went down hard.

Number three Slav was right behind number two boy. He came for me in a long, swooping dive. I had no chance to try the stomach throw, so I did the next best thing. I tried the *uki waza*, the floating drop.

I caught the sleeve of his jacket with my left hand and its padded left shoulder with my right. At the same time I hit the insides of his ankles with both my shoes. His legs went out sideways and he pitched forward through the air. The sound of his fall shook the house.

Number two boy slammed a fist in my belly.

Now I'm no super-woman. The breath whooshed out of my lungs and I was sick. I lay there gagging as number two gave numbers one and three a hand, helping them to their feet.

"She is a wildcat," Two said admiringly.

"She is a damned bitch who ought to have her arms broken," grunted One, rubbing the growing bump on his head. His eyes were close-set and mean.

Number Three chuckled. "Carl, you are always angry when things do not go your way. You must learn patience. Look on the bright side of things. For instance, we have caught a L.U.S.T. lady, I believe."

I gagged for breath, my hands moving tenderly over my belly. I decided I would live, even if I didn't feel much like it.

"What's L.U.S.T.?" I asked weakly.

Three laughed softly. "She is an actress, too. An athletic

actress. A very fascinating character, this L.U.S.T. lady. She must know things it would be good for us to know."

I said something unladylike.

Carl laughed harshly. "We have ways to make athletic actresses talk, especially ones with spirit." There was cruelty in his eyes that went over me slowly, from my alligator Pappagallos up my nyloned gams and my two-tone, long sleeved casual to my face. "Many ways."

I shivered.

"Take her outside," said the leader, number Three.

They took me outside. Number Two led me about a mile away with a Russian Nagant revolver in my back, toward a big black Bentley. I tried to strike up a conversation. I promised him anything (but I'd give him carnage). He wanted no part of me.

He pushed me into the rear seat of the car and got in beside me. I hiked my skirt up to the middle of my stockinged thighs, letting him see bare flesh and a garter plus clasp.

"You're being very foolish," I told him. "You can have me and fifty thousand dollars and asylum in—"

"Sei still!"

The Nagant poked its cold barrel into my ribs.

I seid still.

A minute or two later I saw my Sprite coming down the drive with One at the wheel. I guess he was going to lose it somewhere between here and London. Number Three got out of the Austin Healey and came toward us. The Sprite drove off.

Three got in behind the wheel without even glancing at me. The Nagant went away from my ribs, but not far enough so that I could ignore it. Three started the car and we began our drive to London.

I knew what was going to happen, all right. I was going to be tortured so that H.A.T.E. could learn what I knew. I was sweating with fright. I knew what accomplished H.A.T.E. torturers could do, by personal experience.

I told myself Two would not shoot me. Not really. H.A.T.E. wanted me alive. So I lunged for Two, hands scrabbling at the revolver in his hand. I heard Three curse

softly and risk a glance behind him at me and Two where we were struggling silently, viciously. I aimed a karate chop at his temple. He ducked and took it on the top of his blonde crewcut. I brought a knee up into his face. His nose went all bloody.

"*Veddammt!*" he sobbed.

The Bentley braked sharply, flinging me backward. Three turned and chopped at my neck with the edge of his ham-like hand. At least, I guess he did. Something swatted me there and. . . .

I opened my .20-.20s to the sight of a man bending over me. I tried to scratch his eyes, but my arms and legs and middle were strapped down on a bed. The man smiled.

"Spirit. Yes. That is good. You will not break easily. I do not like people who break easily. It spoils the—fun."

I screamed. The man laughed softly, nodding.

"Good, good, pretty one. Let out your excess energy. You have a wait of about three hours."

I stopped screaming to ask, "Why?"

"The show goes on at nine."

"The show?"

"You will see, you will see."

I saw, at about quarter to nine in the evening. Dark man and a hard-faced woman came into my little room. The woman had a scissors in her hands. She started at the hem-line and ran the shears up my floral casual. She threw back the flaps of my ruined dress, chuckling as my overflowing brassiere and sheer panties came into view.

Dark man whistled, leaning closer.

The woman slid the scissors into my bra, between the D cups. In a moment, my mammary development was bared to dark man whose eyes bulged a little. The woman hit him with an elbow.

"Adolph! Attention to business," she snapped.

Adolph frowned, but he shrugged and asked, "Do you know where the microfilm is?"

"Up yours," I smiled sweetly.

Adolph looked puzzled. "What? What kind of answer is that? Do you mean it is hidden in . . . but no, it could not be."

"Forget it," I muttered.

"The microfilm. You will tell us where it is."

I just sighed.

The man grinned wickedly, the woman frowned. She muttered, "Is better you tell him, lady."

"I know, I know. But I won't."

The woman scowled, then lifted a strip of medical adhesive tape from the pocket of her smock. She tore off a piece and gripping it between forefingers and thumbs, pushed it down across my lips. Well, I certainly couldn't talk now.

"*Ja! Iss gut,*" she nodded, staring down at me.

Adolph said, "When and if you're ready to talk, nod your head three times. Is it understood?"

I just looked at him.

Now they unfastened the leather straps and rolled me over on my front. My arms and legs were too cramped by inactivity for me to put up a fight. The woman grabbed my wrists and yanked them around behind me. She tied them real tightly.

Dark man patted my buttocks, making them jiggle.

"Adolph, stop that. Get her on her feet," ordered the woman.

I stood up in my nylons and black garterbelt. Otherwise it was all me tottering there in my Pappagallos. A hand in the small of my back pushed me forward.

I walked ahead of them out the little room, along a hall and into what looked like a forest of stage props. Heavy sandbags were overhead, hung on cables, there were painted drops waiting to be lowered, there was a little stage.

They shoved me out onto the stage.

I felt my flesh creep as I saw the simulated stones of the backdrop that resembled a medieval torture dungeon, complete with manacles and Iron Maiden. From above, a chain had been lowered, with some cords hanging from it. The cords looked a little worn and my pride whispered to me, They don't even give you new ropes, honey child! I heard a murmur of voices.

A little startled, I turned and stared out across a row of foot lights at about fifty tables where men and women were

sitting. I damn near died. Even while the chain was lowered and the ropes were being bound about my wrists, so I could be hoisted upward, I found myself admiring the nerve of these H.A.T.E. bastards.

This was a private club. It catered to sadists and maybe even a few masochists. They got their jollies by coming here and watching girls get whipped.

There are a number of such clubs, here and there in the world. They are very *sub rosa* in most places, but openly flourishing in certain spots, as in the city of Saseibu, Japan, or in Acapulco, or on trysting boats in Bangkok, for instances. In the Profumo-Keeler scandal in London, the world came to understand that this practice of pain-pleasure is far more widespread than was ever before suspected. Clubs can be found everywhere to cater to these deviates. Like, man, I was in one now.

The chains jerked. The ropes caught my wrists and yanked me upward. I hung there with my toes brushing the floor, rotating slowly. A man with a purple hood over his face came out of the wings, snapping a whip. I tried to yelp for help but the big plaster strip across my lips turned it into a whine.

The man came to a halt five feet from me. He shook out the whip and snapped it. I shuddered at the sound. Then the whip was snaking out behind the man in the purple mask—and coming for my naked pelt.

It stung, wrapping about my hips. It was a tongue of fire against me for a brief instant—and my body responded, jerking, heaving. My muscles strutted. The whine in my throat grew shrill.

The whip went away, as reluctant to leave my flesh as the hand of a lover. Again the whip grabbed my hips. Again. The pain was sickening. I fought the ropes that held me, I yanked and tugged on them. The ropes were worn and frayed, but they were still strong.

I could put my toes on the floor, however. Maybe I had stretched the ropes, I thought. At least I was able to get a purchase on the bare wood with my bare toes, so I tried to dodge the whip.

The audience applauded lustily at sight of my breasts

flopping and my buttocks jiggling as I threw myself one way and then another, dancing about. I faced the glare of lights and unseen eyes. If there was a streak of masochism in my makeup, it might have come out then and there.

There was only my normal self, anxious to get away from that damned whip that bit and stung like a thousand bees. I glanced down at my hips, saw only faint markings. The whip-man was an expert. He could hurt without marking up his victim. I guess he had to be an expert, because paid actresses hung here where I was hanging during their regular performances, and he couldn't beat up on them too badly.

Funny thing about people. Some of them get their kicks from hurting other people. Man is the only animal on the face of the Earth who preys on his own kind. No kidding. The wolves all hang together, so do the tigers, the lions, the bears, the foxes, the panthers. Not man. Man loves to kill and maim his fellows.

Donatien Alphonse Françoise, Marquis de Sade, taught the world all about pain and pleasure. Not that it did not exist before him, he merely gave his name to it, and in a number of novels and literary exploits, examined the subject most thoroughly. Those who like to inflict pain are sadists; those who enjoy receiving pain are masochists, derived from Sacher-Masoch, author of *Venus in Furs*.

The spankers, the whippers, all take an interest in this infliction of pain. Usually the causative agent of this deviation is to be found in early life, where a spanking is associated in the mind with pleasure, and becomes a conditioned reflex in later life. Often latent homosexual instincts, or guilt feelings, play a large part in this deviative development. It is a mental regression to childhood, with its attendant pleasures and its lack of responsibilities.

Both my feet were on the floor by this time.

I glanced upward, rolling my eyes a little—as if I were on the verge of fainting. I played up to the audience—there is a little ham in all of us—but I played up to the H.A.T.E. crowd even more. I wanted them to think I was ready to collapse and admit I was beaten.

Actually, I was looking at the ropes around my wrists.

To my surprise, I saw that they had not stretched. Therefore, since I could now stand on the floor, the chain had come down a little. Maybe the winch that supported those links had weakened.

The whip curled about my buttocks.

The man in the purple hood whispered, "Will you talk? Or do I put the lash a little harder?"

The audience could not hear him, but I could. He had come a little closer, a step or two while he whispered. I jumped up. My fingers caught the chain.

I kicked outward with both bare feet.

My heels took the man right in his purple mask. I felt nose cartilage crunch.

I am an athletic sort of girl, upon occasion. I hauled my body upward so my mouth was level with the ropes that held my wrist. I hung by one hand and caught the medical plaster with forefinger and thumb.

I yanked.

"Spies!" I screamed. "These men are Commie spies! Go call a bobby—a dozen bobbies! Alert the War Department and M.I. 5!"

The audience was on its feet, muttering.

"This isn't part of the show, Goddamit!" I screeched.

I started going up the chain, hand over hand. My wrists were still roped to the chain, but a big loop of chain dangled below me as I climbed. There was no one above on the catwalk, but there would be somebody there mighty soon.

I climbed faster. But not fast enough.

Dark man was running out onto the walk now, his shoes making a metallic thunder at each footfall. He looked a little frightened. He was in the proverbial quandry. I had raised such a stink there might be an investigation of the club. For this, he ought to shoot me.

But—

I was too valuable a property to shoot down dead. I was a L.U.S.T. agent, and as such I knew things H.A.T.E. would like to know. So dark man was going to be a real hero and capture me all by himself.

Well, maybe not all by himself. Now there were two more

men behind him, also running toward me. I climbed faster.

I put a hand on the catwalk. I hauled myself up, I hooked a naked leg over the metal rail. I gathered the long loop of chain in my hands. I swung that loop as if it were a baseball bat.

The chain took dark man across the side of his head. He let out a single scream as his body went sideways, slammed into the rail and fell over it to the stage. The sodden thump of his body on the floorboards was the fuse that set off the stunned audience.

There were screams, some curses. I heard feet running.

I braced my feet and sent my chain swinging in a loop over my head. The first man within range of those heavy links took them across his face. He did not fall over the rail, but he sank to his knees, his features all over blood. He was moaning, moving his face around in his now-bloody palms.

The second man halted, turned back.

I bent over the railing, began to work the ropes back and forth, picking the most frayed part to break. After a few moments, the ropes sprang apart. I twisted my wrists free and rubbed them a moment.

The moaning man had a shoulder holster on with a Russian Nagant in it. I grabbed for the gun, yanked it free. I lifted the gun.

I put a bullet in the middle of the back of the other man, who was almost at the end of the catwalk by now. He fell face down on the metal flooring and skidded.

I ran after him, stark naked and mad as hell. My hips still stung from that gee-damned whip. If I caught sight of any of those H.A.T.E. bastards, they were going to suffer.

I went down the little metal ladder.

Three men came out of the shadows and looked up at me. One of them was Number Two—the boy with the mean eyes—another was Number One. I did not recognize the third character.

I halted my downward progress. I put the Nagant on Number Two and squeezed trigger. I caught him smack in the middle of his forehead. Too late, Number One clawed for his own gun. I guess he still thought he could re-capture me. My bullet made a red mess of his belly.

The other joe started to turn. He was almost directly under me, so my bullet took him in the middle of his balding pate. I breathed a sigh of thankfulness for those torturous hours of target practice that had enabled me to win my sharpshooter medals with .22, .38 and .45 revolvers.

I ran for the dressing rooms. I needed clothes. The hefty woman with the hard face came running from a doorway, holding a short club in her hand. Lucky for her she didn't have a gun. I swung the Russian revolver and took her across the temple with its barrel. She went down like a sack of grain.

I skidded into the dressing room.

I had no hope of finding my own clothes. I snatched up a pert Lady Windsor raincoat—it was something like a trench coat, only on more classic lines—and wrapped my nakedness in it. Then I found a discarded pair of pumps in a pile of dirty clothes and slipped my feet into them. They made a tight squeeze, but I could stand a little toe-jostling.

I ran for the stage door.

There was no doorman. I guess all the underlings had fled the coop at the sound of the gunshots. I opened the door and ran out into a rainy fog. Bless this London weather! It would keep anybody from paying too much attention to me as I hot-footed it down the alleyway and out onto a neon-lighted street.

I was in Soho. It took me less than five minutes to reach Berwick Street and a taxi. I flung myself into the back seat.

I had no money, of course. I had searched the pockets of the raincoat three times, without luck. The fare would not be much, ten shillings at most. I hoped the doorman would pay it.

The doorman looked at me oddly, but when I told him I would double what he gave the driver, he smiled and said, "Guess I can take the chance, miss. Bit of a time you've had, eh?"

I patted his cheek. "You darling!"

The crowd in the glass-walled lounge eyed me curiously as I sped naked in the Lady Windsor to the elevators. The

clerk at the key desk raised his eyebrows, but he recognized me and handed over the key to 402. I scampered for the elevator.

I opened the door to a dark room.

Arms went around me, gripping me like a python. The Nagant was in the raincoat pocket out of reach so I did the next best thing. My naked body turned inside the Dacron polyester raincoat—and my knee jammed upward solidly.

There was a grunt and the arms went away.

I lifted my hand to karate-chop the man who was bending over, moaning a little and clutching himself.

"Eve," he whispered. "It's—"

"David!" I screamed. "Oh my poor, poor darling!"

I hit the switch with a hand and bending, caught David and helped him into the bedroom. I stretched him out on the bed, undid his belt and zipper and yanked down his shorts. Then I ran for the bathroom.

I soaked a hand towel in cold water and ran back. I wrapped the towel about his aching parts and stood up, breathing heavily.

He grimaced at me. "I was going to surprise you."

"You did, darling. You did, indeed! But you see, I've had a brush with H.A.T.E. I just finished killing four men and I sort of figured you were in on the deal."

He patted the edge of the bed with a palm.

I told him everything that had happened to me since I had come to London town, omitting only the more esoteric details of my date with The Satyr. David, I knew very well, could fill in those gaps from past experience.

David Anderjanian is a big blonde Viking of a man. He stands six feet four and weighs maybe two-twenty, all of it solid bone and muscle. He is also quite a man in the malehood department. I hoped I hadn't ruined him.

"Where are you staying?" I wondered.

"The London Hilton, just a few blocks south of here. I was going to ask you to join me over a steak in their London Tavern—but now I know what delayed you, I'll give you a rain check."

"I'll call room service. You've reminded me I haven't eaten since lunchtime in Salisbury."

I ordered over the phone, then rejoined David.

"I brought along a few odds and ends for you, Eve," he told me. "Things I had the General order a rush job on. Earrings, a bracelet, things like that."

"All lethal, I hope?" I asked, remembering the whip.

He grinned. I got to my feet and hoisted the Lady Windsor, showing him my legs and behind all welted and red. David cursed softly.

I turned around. The towel was making a bit of a tent. I do have a nice behind, I must admit. I gurgled laughter. "Well, I'm glad to see you're feeling better, chief."

He looked a little wan, but he managed a smile. "I'm going to kiss those wounds of battle. Oh Oh Sex—and make 'em all better. Just as soon as I'm myself again."

I removed the towel, smiling down at him. "That won't be long," I giggled. "I'll go wet this again, to hurry up the process."

When I finished draping the cold towel about him, there was a knock on the door. David pulled up his shorts and pants. I went to the door and let the uniformed waiter in. He was polite, he merely glanced at my raincoat. I am sure he was thinking that nobody could explain the crazy Americans.

We had Scotch on the rocks, club sandwiches and coffee. When we were done, I lighted two cigarettes and passed one to David.

"What's the plan of action?" he asked.

"I've got to meet this Thom Morris. He's the only one who can tell me where he got the microfilm."

David dragged smoke into his lungs, let it out slowly. "You're going to backtrack? What good will that do you—unless there's another microfilm?"

"It's what I'm hoping. I don't even know what's in the damn thing. Do you?"

"All I know is, it's a formula of some sort. What it is, what it does, I haven't the foggiest notion."

"H.A.T.E. doesn't have it, I know that much. If they had, they wouldn't have been ransacking Eric Downes' study when I walked in on them."

"He picked a damned good hiding place if neither you

nor H.A.T.E. can find it. My own curiosity is up and quivering, now."

I glanced at him, smiling. "Your curiosity isn't the only thing, darling. You *do* feel better."

I put out a hand toward the wet towel.

The telephone rang.

CHAPTER FIVE

There must be a connection between David, me and telephones. Back in Miami Beach, we had been interrupted in our sport by that thrice-damned instrument a number of times.

Now the London phone company was about to break us up.

Just as I touched him, just as his hand was catching my left leg and drawing it toward him so his lips could caress my thigh, the jangle intervened. I had to get off the bed to reach the phone.

"Hello?"

David smiled and turned over on his left side. He put his hand under the Lady Windsor and ran his palm up and down my bare leg, right up to my buttock. His fingertips were feathers, tickling me. I wriggled.

"You-know-who here," said The Satyr.

"Well, hello," I caroled. "Has our friend called?"

"Yes, indeed—and is paying me a visit in half an hour. I know it's late, but if you want to come over. . . ?"

"Be right there," I told him.

David was lifting my raincoat, leaning over the edge of the bed to kiss a red welt left by the whip. His breath was hot, his lips were moist, and my flesh reacted.

"Darling, don't," I whispered, not moving.

"Don't be mean, Oh Oh Sex," he breathed, lips sliding up over my hip.

"That was The Satyr. Thom Morris is going to stop by his place tonight. I really have to run, David."

His teeth gently into a soft buttock.

"Do you?"

"Please, David. You have to be strong for both of us. I'm weak where you're concerned."

"Good," he laughed—but he took away his lips.

The towel was on the carpet. David was much better.

I sighed. "I'm sorry as hell about this. If you think I should stay and pass up meeting Thom Morris. . . ."

David lay back and closed his eyes.

"Go," he said softly. "And hurry up about it. I don't know how long I can hold back if you stay much longer."

"Poor David," I whispered, running to the closet to catch up some clothes. "I'm sorry—but I really am glad to see you're feeling healthy."

David said a naughty word.

My Movado chronograph told me it was close to two in the morning. I might have problems getting a taxi. I knew that there were usually taxis waiting at the rear door of the Grosvenor House or on Park Street right behind it, most of the time. There is a lot of night life in London, with people coming and going at all hours. I crossed my fingers as I slipped into my pantihose and wriggled it up over my thighs and hips.

"That's the damndest, most seductive thing I've ever seen," muttered David, propped up by an elbow on top of the bed.

I turned and waggled my behind at him, while I reached for a dress. "It's utilitarian," I told him, sliding a Jean Patou white silk crepe down over my head. "Keeps a girl modest in these mini-skirts."

"Of course. I should have known."

I stuck my tongue out at him and ran for the door, snatching up my Lady Windsor and a handbag. The sight of my fingers wriggling a good-bye at him was the last thing David Anderjanian was to see of me for quite a while.

After handing the doorman a pound note, to pay him with interest for his loan, I found a sleepy cabbie on Park Street and gave him the Mornington Crescent adress. I sank back into the seat and gathered my wits about me. I wondered if Thom Morris would demand another two hundred pounds for telling me who had given him the microfilm.

If he did, I promised it would come out of David Anderjanian's pocket, not my pocketbook. It was time L.U.S.T. picked up a tab or two.

London was stirring, breathing all around me as the taxi moved up Oxford Street to St. Giles Circus, then left onto Tottenham Court Road. The streets held only a few passerby, but there were quite a few taxis and private cars, big Bentleys and smaller MG Midgets to be seen. I wondered if any of their passengers were going on a stranger mission than Eve Drum.

My finger on the buzzer brought footfalls to the door of The Satyr's digs. The big black wooden door opened to a hand and The Satyr stood there in a dressing robe, in bare ankles, his equally bare feet pressing into the lobby carpet.

"Why didn't you tell me dress was informal?" I quipped as I stepped in to stare at the two shadow boxes with their perpetually loving couples.

Beyond the archway, the living room was lighted by dim lamps. It was mood stuff done in blue, as if to highlight the pale white body of the woman who lay stark naked on the sofa, her hands clasped behind her greying black hair, smiling at me.

"Darling, come cen and join the fun," she breathed.

I whirled on Herbert Ahearn, thinking about poor David and how I had left him. "I thought you said I was going to meet Thom Morris here!" I snapped.

The Satyr gestured. "Meet Thomasina Morris, pet."

The naked woman giggled. "I aff many names, darling. Thomasina Morris ees my English one. I aff many accents

too. I am a woman of many personalities. All bad, I might add."

I ran my eyes from slender white ankles up past dimpled knees to rather fleshy thighs. She was in her late thirties, maybe early forties. Her body was shaved, her belly pouched very faintly, and her breasts were even bigger than mine, with rigid brown nipples. Her face was smooth, but there were tiny crowsfeet at the corners of her eyes.

I answered her smile with my lips and my eyes. I tossed my handbag onto a nearby chair. "What've you two been doing while I was taking a taxi ride? Whatever it was, I'm sure I interrupted something pleasant."

The Satyr sat down on the edge of the couch, nudged her thigh with his hip. Lazily the woman caught a fold of his dressing gown, started drawing it toward her as if she were sliding back a stage curtain. I stared. The Satyr was at his very satyriest.

"Well, I really did interrupt something," I laughed. "Excuse me!"

The woman gurgled laughter. "I luff to tease. I aff been teasing heem, no more. I am big tease, eh?"

Her red fingernails were scratching lightly. Herbie-boy was quivering, biting down on his lip. I moved a little in the chair, crossing my legs and pressing my thighs together, lost in admiration of how Herbert Ahearn was responding to her strokings.

"I'll go away," I told the woman, "if you'll tell me who gave you the microfilm."

"Who should you go away, sweetheart?" she murmured.

I had never shared a man with another woman. I like my privacy when I make love. I was curious, however. As I say, I have read a lot.

The triple play in Erosville is as old as Adam and Eve—and Lilith. It is the core of the French *menage a trois*, in which a man takes up with two women, or maybe even two men with one woman. The psychodynamics of troilism is that a family is formed by them, the father, the mother and the child. It is a refuge for insecure people, also for those afflicted with latent homosexuality; or so the books say.

Wife swapping is a sub-division of troilism. One mate or

the other—usually it is the wife who instigates these proceedings, or puts the final approval to them—may have a touch of this homosexuality or be bisexual. He or she get their kicks from watching a wife or a husband indulge themselves with a woman or a man.

Exhibitionism plays a big part in troilism. A woman may enjoy letting others see how attractive she is when partially dressed or nude. She will derive an extra enjoyment by proving her desirability as a female in front of others, when being made love to. We human beings have many foibles.

Governments are gradually coming to understand this fact. Past legislation, that has tended to inhibit and arrest certain types of sexual behavior, has been repealed in favor of newer, more understanding laws. In England, the Wolfenden Committee heard testimony favoring legal allowance of any manner of sexual acts between people in private. Back in the states, various state congresses are also beginning to favor such a change. The world is undergoing a revolution in sexual mores as once it underwent socio-economic revolutions like the American War of Independence and the French Revolution.

This is no new thing. The ancient world had its Greek love festivals, so did the Roman. In the Middle Ages, there were the Love Courts. Man being what he is, a creature who can make love in all seasons, is guided quite often by the animal side of him. The mores of his sex swings like a pendulum all through history. The Victorian Age is a thing of his past. Today it is a swinging world.

Thomasina Morris was one of its wildest swingers, I was discovering. She was smiling at The Satyr, glancing up at me from time to time. Her hips were moving in a steady rhythm.

My own hips were keeping time as I sat in the chair across from them. I could not tear my eyes away from The Satyr and her pale white hand. Herbie-boy was leaning backward, his body shuddering from time to time, eyes closed and mouth a little open.

It was going to be a night, all right. What was left of it, anyhow. I stood up, I crossed the room to the sofa, pulling up my mini-skirt, reaching behind me for my zipper tab.

The woman said, "Eef you like, I will tell you the name

you want, right now. I am not like naughty Herbert, who thinks of money even before he thinks of making luff. I aff enough money. I never aff enough luff."

I eased my Patou crepe over my head. My breasts hung huge and hard, and Thomasina Morris laughed softly at sight of my erected nipples.

"You are hurting, dear. Is good. So ees Herbert." She smiled, "Me, I am not insensitiff to pleasure, either!"

Her left hand abandoned Herbert to slide up my thigh and across the taut nylon at my middle. I shivered.

"Have you ever read Astynassa, who was Helen of Troy's maid-servant?" I breathed.

Her eyes grew brilliant. "*The Erotic Postures?* The ones Suadas mentions?"

I nodded. "Astyanassa mentions that Helen herself invented some very fancy ones that involved herself, her maidservant and Menelaus her husband. If Helen of Troy was one half as knowing as her servant has made her no wonder they fought a war over her."

Fingertips brushed my golden puff, back and forth. "I never knew there existed a copy of the *Postures*. I know Suedas had a copy handy when he wrote, but I've always assumed it perished, maybe during an early sacking of Rome."

"My great-grandfather was a librarian for a German baron, a man who collected erotica. When the old baron died, my great-grandfather helped himself to a large number of his rarer items—intending to sell them. For some reason, he decided to keep them. They have proved educational as well as—entertaining."

Thomasina laughed. "I myself am German, my love. My mother was a baroness. I know many of the old families collected such books. So. You have Astyanassa? What about the *Dodechtechmon*?"

I winked at her. "That too, baroness!"

She wriggled in delight at the title. "Nobody calls me baroness any more. It makes me feel like a goddess. Thomasina is such a silly name, I don't know why I picked it."

Herbert opened his eyes and looked at me. "Ducks, I'm in positive torture. Please, ducks—please!"

The baroness chortled laughter. "Poor darling! He's been in a state for half an hour before you came. I really think we ought to help him out."

She disentangled her long white legs from behind him. She had been crushed between The Satyr and the sofa-back. Now she lifted her legs so that her knees brushed her chin and was about to roll on her left side and put her feet on the floor when The Satyr struck. Turning, he lunged.

The woman grunted, eyes wide and mouth open. "*Herr Gott*," she breathed, shuddering. She was lying on her left side, but she turned slowly, pivoting on him, until her shapely white legs were draped over his hips while he himself remained on his side. Her breasts jellied to his savage thrustings and her mouth was a red O of orgasmic pleasure.

His hands clawed at her hips and thighs, holding her.

"I wanted you to—have him first and—" she was panting, moving against her will. "I do not like—to be taken like a bitch in heat and —"

She could not help the spasms that convulsed her. Her legs squeezed downward, heels forcing him deeper. Her eyes opened wide as did her mouth, silently, then shut tightly. Her middle was a savage pump, beating, beating, beating.

I bent above the dancing brown nipples. I touched them with the palms of my hands. "Honeychild," I breathed. "The name?"

She was shuddering steadily now in the throes of ultimate pleasure. There are women who can enjoy the orgasm almost without cessation, to balance off the frigid ones, I suppose. Though there are few, if any, nerve-ends inside the female organ, nature has fashioned the perineum, that area about the genital or anal structures, and made it highly sensitive to stimulation. The fact that the clitoral bud is quite often brought into play at such times increases the sensual pleasure a hundred-fold.

The orgasm is a gift of nature which relieves muscular and nervous tensions in a man or woman. It is the to-be-desired culmination of sex play, the goal toward which all lovers strive. The Bartholeian glands are flowing, the pulse rate is speeded up, the blood pressure builds toward a peak. At the same time, the lungs require more oxygen and so

there is that deep, fast breathing during which the facial features assume truly grotesque contortions.

And then occurs that final contraction of muscles and nerves accompanied by unconsciousness or a state of semi-consciousness in which the person undergoing the orgasm is almost completely unaware of reality. They neither know nor care how they look, if anyone is watching, or if pain is being inflicted upon them. They are really out of their world.

The baroness was tensing, shuddering, head jerking, arms flung wide and fingers clawing at the empty air. She was sucking deep draughts of air into her lungs. Her eyelids lifted and closed. She was hooked on her own body and knew nothing else.

She did not hear my urgent whispers. She was too deep within the Nirvana of forgetfulness, the other-where of bodily pleasure, to heed anything but her own happiness. To the baroness, there existed nothing but the man and herself, nor did she desire anything but that, at this moment.

I sat back on my heels, a little in awe of what was taking place. The Satyr and the German noblewoman were quite alone in their private Elysian Fields. I was a third thumb, without a hand.

I would never learn the name of him who had given her that microfilm. Not for a while, at least. I felt like phoning David and telling him to come over. I was getting a little desperate, watching their jollies.

I got to my feet and moved around the living room, but everywhere I looked, there was evidence that I was a too, too human real live girl without a lover. The pictures hanging on the walls increased my heightened wants, the agony of my heightened senses.

I found myself face to face with a wooden Phallos Temple from Japan. Under a slanted roof painted with representations of the female organ, seven *daikons* had been placed, painted wooden effigies of the male member. I shook, I actually had a fit of the ague, looking at those damned things. I put out a hand, I drew it back. I guess I just stared and stared, because next thing I knew hands were cupping my breasts and a soft mouth was kissing my throat.

"Did you think I add forgotten you, darling?" whispered the baroness, making cooing sounds deep in her throat. "Ahhh, no. *Non! Nein! Nyet!*"

I glanced over my shoulder at the couch. The Satyr was out like a light, noring gently. The baroness was kissing my soft white back all the way to my pantihose, catching the elastic in her fingers and rolling it down and over my thighs.

Her lips kissed. I cried out.

"Herbert Ahearn is a human being, with the sexual weaknesses of a human, my dear. I am—inhuman."

I could not fight her soft kisses, the touchings of her tongue. I shivered steadily, I moaned.

"Please," I heard myself whimper. "Please, oh please. . . ."

It was fun to be a pupil, for a change. Quite often I am the teacher, the instigator of the foreplay, directing its course and duration. In the hands of the baroness, I was but a child. These European women have centuries of love-making ingrained into their flesh. It has something to do with heredity, I am told.

I was her plaything, this night.

It was all I could do to gasp, "The name? Please tell me the name so I can . . . so I can. . . ."

My bare buttocks felt the hot breath of her soft laughter. "Of course, my pet. You must go to see Herr Wolfgang von Horstmann in Hamburg—along the Herberstrasse. You probably know it as the Reeperbahn."

She gave my buttocks two final kisses, then got to her feet. "He runs an entertainment emporium there, the Pleasure Dome. Xanadu and all that. The poem, you know?"

I nodded, even as she put her hands on my upper arms and turned me to face her. She smiled down at my swollen breasts jutting through the holes in my brassiere. She leaned forward, brushing her thickened nipples against my own.

"There iss no need to take it off. I do not think you could, anyhow. But come, we shall leave Herbert to his dreams, you and I."

I felt as if I were in a dream myself, locked inside a

walking nightmare of sensual excitement. The Baroness had seen my study of the Japanese *daikons* in the little shrine box. She reached out to them, ran her fingertips across all seven of the painted effigies.

"We shall not use these. Herbert has a better one in hees bedroom. One which we may both use."

Understanding burst in me. "Oh. You mean the double dildo?"

Her eyes were gleeful under her upraised eyebrows. "So? You know it? Aff you effer used it?"

I shook my head. She seemed cheered by the news. "Gut, gut! Ve shall initiate you this night. It ees my favorite of all favorite ways." She hesitated, glancing at *The Satyr* as she led me toward the bedroom archway, then added, "He was marfelous tonight. I think he vas aff crazy. Nefer haff I known him to be so potent. It was a vunderful experience."

Her hand touched a small switch and once again I saw the Satyr's bedroom in all its blue radiance. The baroness padded to the chest of drawers, bent over and brought out a smooth wooden object shaped somewhat like a blunted scimitar, each end being a perfect simulcra of the male member.

She turned and came toward me, carrying the dildo in her hand. Her laughter was soft as she noticed me eying it. "You will enjoy it, I promise," she whispered

Her hand turned me and brought me to the bed. Usually I am the aggressor, it was pleasant to be guided by this older woman, to let myself be arranged sideways on the bed with my feet hanging over the edge of the coverlets.

The baroness tossed the dildo aside. She whispered, "Close your eyes, my luff. Pretend . . . pretend I am your liffer . . . your boy friend. . . ."

I smiled and let my eyelids sink. I could scarcely visualize this woman as David Anderjanian, but the brush of her moist lips across my nipples, the feathers of her fingertips hunting my erogenous zones, lifted me out of my imagination into a misty mid-region of wakefulness mixed with sensory delight.

I squirmed, I whimpered, I gasped.

She worked on my body a long time. I was quivering in

an Eden of erotica when her lips and tongue abandoned me. I hung poised a moment, shaking, shivering, and then—

I screamed. I convulsed. I opened my eyes, saw that she was joined with me in our mutual harmony of happiness. The pleasure zones of my female flesh were alive and throbbing. It became too much of a strain to look at her. I let my eyes fall shut, closing out the world. My hips worked steadily, hungrily.

No one knows how old the artificial male organ may be. Clay replicas of the penis have been found in ancient, long-dead cities such as Ugarit and Mari. The Bible mentions the images of gold and silver with which the women of Jerusalem committed their whoredoms. These objects were sold quite openly in Rome. For very rich customers, they were made of solid gold. The Roman god Priapus was nothing more or less than the male membrum, the symbol of life itself to the pagans. Priapian images, surmounted by a bearded head, could be found along the Roman roads, at crossroads, in country towns, on city street corners. They were an honest lot, those old Romans.

The god Mutunus Tutunus was known to every bride in the Rome of the twelve Caesars. Upon this wooden rigidity the young bride sacrificed her hymen before joining her husband in the bridal bed. Long the object of veneration, the male member was the symbol of the recurring life force that waxed and ebbed with seasonal changes in the very earliest days—it had become a marriage deity. The Greek word *phallos* meant the representation of the male member, rather than the penis itself. It was carved from horn or wood, in most instances. In time, the term *olisboi* was given to these apparati with which women satisfied their passions. The poems of Herondas of Cos mentions a visit of two women to the shop of one Cerdon, who apparently had other uses for leather than making sandals for their feet. In Greece as well as Rome, at festival time, pastries in the shape of the god were bought, eaten and enjoyed.

In India, the adoration of Priapus becomes lingam-worship. The god Siva is always in an aroused state, and so is venerated by his followers. It was Siva, who, according to the legend, emasculated himself, thus denoting a kind of death, though he is re-born later on. This recurring death

and re-birth is another form of the fall and winter, spring and summer, death and birth of the crops and plants on which early man depended for his very existence.

In Paris, call it *godemiche*; in England, *dildo*; in Italy, *diletto*. But by whatever name it is known, the instrument is happiness to a lot of tensed-up women all over the Earth. It was happiness to the baroness.

And to me.

CHAPTER SIX

The city of Hamburg is situated on the right bank of the river Elbe. At one time it was the third largest seaport in the world, and even today its great harbor shelters ships from all nations. Massive church towers stare down across more than six miles of riverfront docks. Known as the Venice of the North, the streets of the Old City are canals, and the great lake fashioned by the dams of the Alter river adds to the impression that much of the city floats on the bosom of the Elbe.

Ships bring sailors to a city, and this city which was long ago a fortress for Charlemagne, taking its name from the great forest which hemmed it in, is no exception. From the beginnings of the Crusades, Hamburg has been renowned for the volume of its business, and for the number of seamen who flock across its promenades and public gardens.

In the Sankt Pauli section of the city, between Altona

and the New City, lies a street with huge iron gates at either end. This is the Herberstrasse, more familiarly known as the Reeperbahn. It is a sex street, an avenue of Eros, where a man or woman may buy any pleasure they are seeking.

It is ten blocks of fun and games—or worse. Along the Reeperbahn proper there are plush beer gardens and posh night clubs. You can munch a hot dog and empty a stein of beer and watch the crowds go by, you can dance with a girl in a nite spot, you can feast on strudel, brockwurst and schnapps.

You can also visit the *real* Reeperbahn.

The Reeperbahn which the sailors visit, the Reeperbahn of the *cinema bleu*, of the cubicles where the girls are waiting, each one a specialist in one form of sex or another. Here are the sin palaces, the vice dens, the sophisticated sex parlors.

I wore a skirt, sweater and knee-length boots as I passed through the iron gates. One of the attendants did not want to let me enter but I assured him I was able to take care of myself, and a handful of marks convinced him maybe I could.

When a sailor got a little hand trouble and began rubbing up against me, I said, "Sorry, you louse. I'm gay." And when a hardened lesbo sought to interest me in coming home to her apartment in the Neustadt, I told her I was regular.

I walked straight ahead along the Herberstrasse. I only gave side glances toward the curtained rooms where the prostitutes showed off their wares; I was interested in a social but not a sexual sense. Before I reached the Pleasure Dome, it began to rain. There was nowhere to duck into the many rooms that lined the downstairs of these house brothels. And I didn't want to do that. Not yet, anyhow.

I moved off the main street, seeking a doorway. I found one in an alleyway not far from my destination. The rains came down but I was reasonably dry. After a while the sky turned blue, the air seemed a lot fresher, and there were puddles all over the streets.

Here and there I saw muddy patches, where grew tiny gardens. There were not many of these little spots where

flowers grew, but you could glimpse one occasionally in the slum area behind the Herberstrasse.

I was thinking about the Pleasure Dome when I saw the footprints etched in mud. I came to a dead stop.

I had seen these same prints—a deeper indentation and a lesser one with a shallow trench behind it—in soft loam outside the patio of Eric Downes' manor house in England. The little hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Had these prints been made by a H.A.T.E. agent? And—was he here in the Pleasure Dome ahead of me? I wanted to run, but I did not dare betray myself.

The Pleasure Dome is a glorified fun house. It is oriental in nature—the Germans do a thriving trade with the Arab countries—with slender columns and much imitation filigree work done in cheap stone. Tiles on the floor and a fountain splashing colored waters, the sound of flutes and tambourines, piped in over a loudspeaker system, added to the esoteric touch.

The harem girl waitresses were all but naked in tiny boleros that failed to cover their bouncing breasts and transparent harem trousers—the kind which are known in the hot countries as *chaliwar*—and wore slippers with up-turned toes upon their bare feet. Maybe a hundred men were in the big dining and drinking area on the first floor, being waited upon by these modern day Ouled Nails.

One of the girls approached me, eyebrows arched.

"May I help you?"

"I want to see Herr von Horstmann."

I took out a folded ten mark note and slipped it into her fingers. I said, when I saw the alarm in her face, "I am not the police. I am a friend. Tell him the baroness sent me."

The girl nodded and gestured me toward a small table. Another harem doll trotted over, so I ordered a Tanqueray martini.

Just opposite me was a curtained alcove. With a faint clatter of metal hangers, the curtains whooshed back and I found myself staring through a glass window at a naked woman on a big, low hassock. She held a lapdog in her arms and was amusing herself with it.

I stared in numb fascination.

I had read about such things but I had not seen anything

like the act the woman put on. I know that it was geared to raise the blood pressure and sex interests of the men and maybe even the women who were present. I felt the reaction myself, and crossed and uncrossed my legs a number of times.

Half the men rose to their feet at the end of the performance. Harem girls ran to guide them through a distant doorway and (I guess) upstairs to the tiny rooms where women waited to be enjoyed.

There were a dozen of these curtained, glassed-in windows. I wondered at what the other curtains would show when they slid back. I was almost tempted to stay and find out but my own Ouled Nail was back, telling me Herr von Horstmann would see me now.

I trotted after her shaking buttocks. She was very fleshy, she looked like the traditional harem beauty with overly large breasts and a full behind. I think she was Turkish. As she stepped aside for me to pass through an upstairs doorway and into an office, I gave her fanny a little pat. She giggled.

A lean man with a brush of iron-grey hair above a high, tanned forehead, rose to his feet as I entered the office. His blue eyes were highly intelligent, his pose was rigid, showing old military training. His rather thin lips curved into a faint smile at sight of me.

"My Pleasure Dome gets few such visitors as yourself, fraulein. Please be seated." His hand gestured at an easy chair.

Instead, I chose a straightback chair beside the desk. He shrugged and seated himself, folding his heavily tanned hands on a spotless desk blotter. The easy chair *might* have been booby-trapped.

"Now then, how may I help you? You mentioned the baroness. I trust she is well?"

"She was very healthy last time I saw her."

Von Horstmann laughed almost under his breath. "A woman pursued by phantoms, the baroness. Her flesh is her master. Still, none of us are perfect."

"She sends her regards."

"She is a good-hearted woman. It was she who kept me from committing suicide, many years ago." He paused and

looked down at his folded fingers. "It was after the war, the Russians had overrun my ancestral home in Prussia. My wife, my children, were all killed at this time. I felt I had nothing left to live for. The baroness changed my mind."

"She has a way with people."

"She taught me the dead must be forgotten, that the living must make a new life for themselves. She interested me in sex both for its own sake and as a business. I saved up all my money, bought into the Pleasure Dome and now I am sole owner."

He smiled at me, then frowned. "And you, young lady? Why are you here? A job? A position? I have many girls coming to me for work."

"No, nothing like that. I'm interested in a microfilm—"

His finger shot up to his lips. He rose and went to a door, closing it. Then, touching a decoration on the ornate mantel, he came to stand before me.

"We must be very careful. There are spies everywhere. They come, they go, they cannot be denied the flesh pleasures. It is very easy for them, here in the Reeperbahn. Now then, you were saying about a microfilm?"

I explained the death of Eric Downes and how I had been brought into the action when the microfilm I was supposed to have picked up was either gone or hidden so cleverly neither H.A.T.E. nor I could locate it. He watched me with a rather puzzled expression.

"You say you do not have this microfilm? That H.A.T.E. has been unable to find it? I find this almost incredible. I—ah—have some personal knowledge of how H.A.T.E. functions."

He walked up and down the thick carpet, turning every so often to study me. At last he sighed and spread his hands.

"Obviously, you want something of me. I do not have the microfilm, I assure you."

"No, I didn't expect you did. I was hoping that you might put me in touch with the contact on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Perhaps he might be able to snag another copy for me."

"Ah, yes. You do not know the name of this person?"

I shook my head. "Don't you?"

He smiled genially, rubbing his hands together. "Of

course, of course. But ah—I have to make certain arrangements so you can visit him. Visas and such, friends to be informed of your coming. Eh?”

His hand pressed a hidden button beneath the desk.

“While I see to this matter of meeting your contact, eh?” His smile flashed again. “I will summon a guide—one of my handsome young men—who will show you around my entertainment emporium.”

The handsome young man entered. He was a big blonde boy, tanned and muscular, very good looking. His blue eyes touched me, then moved on to Herr von Horstmann.

“Helmut, meet Miss Eve Drum. Miss Drum—Helmut Fleischel.”

Helmut clicked his heels and bowed. I gave him a cheery smile and a wink. Helmut flushed.

“It will be my pleasure,” he said in precise English.

I got to my feet, turning and looking at von Horstmann. “You will hurry it up? I really don’t have all that time to enjoy myself. I’d like to be away within the hour.”

“But certainly, Miss Drum. I’ll make the necessary arrangements at once,” the older man smiled.

I hooked an arm with my big blonde escort. “Where away, skipper?” I asked. I heard von Horstmann chuckle behind me.

We went out into the hall. Helmut asked, “What is your pleasure, Miss Drum?”

“Call me Eve, first of all. Now then, what’s on the menu? I mean, what’ve you got to offer?”

His hands spread apart. “Anything.”

“Gambling? A dice table, for instance?”

“Naturally.”

“And—sex?”

Helmut nodded, his blue eyes shining.

“What about lady wrestlers in the mud pits?”

“Ja, those too.”

“All right, let’s go have fun.”

His pale blonde brows lifted. “All of them?”

“As many as we can cover, honey.”

The gaming room was on the floor above the office. We took an elevator operated by a harem houri. As we stepped out, I saw two muscle boys in tight-tight trunks walk past.

"How come you're not in uniform?" I wondered.

Helmut informed me stiffly that he was on the executive staff. He was von Horstmann's right hand man. He was not there to pander to vices.

I giggled, at which he became all apologies, telling me he did not mean that by escorting me he was pandering to my sinful yearnings. This was in the nature of a tour, no more.

"Tour or not, if I can win myself a few shakels, I intend to, Helmut honey." I handed him a roll of bills. "Will you change this into chips?"

His heels clicked again as he bowed.

The table was almost the exact twin of the one at the Bully Sawyer in London. There was a boxman and a stickman, and five people grouped about the high-boarded sides. I took an empty space and watched the dice roll half a dozen times before I began putting my chips down.

I won, I lost. I was ahead about thirty American dollars when the boxman asked me if I cared to roll. I held out my hand and he dropped the dice into my palm.

Almost instantly, I knew there was something wrong with these galloping dominoes. My fingertips are very sensitive, due to the long hours I used to practice (and still do, when I get the opportunity) opening combination locks. I hefted the dice, I rattled them around.

There are many ways to hocus dice. As I ran my fingertips over these, I was positive these dice had plastic strips along one edge, which would alter their normal balance. I thought of trying a pad roll on the first play, hitting them off the board down low so they would come off the board spinning and not rolling.

I pretended to rattle the dice in my cupped hands, but I was gripping them firmly between my forefinger and pinkie with a five and a deuce showing. I sent them outward in a flat throw.

The dice hit the board, spun back.

They twirled a couple of times on the green field, and stopped with a five and a deuce showing. I had bet half chips on seven. I let my winnings ride.

I threw four more sevens before I decided to lose a throw. I did not want Helmut Fleischel or the boxman to get suspicious.

Then for the fun of it, I rolled a nine and after three deliberate misses, I threw another nine. Helmut was regarding me with round eyes.

He said, "I have never seen a woman throw the dice so well."

Dice is an American pastime. American tourists used to rob the English blind at the dice tables until our cousins caught wise and hired Americans to run the crap boards. Herr von Horstmann got few Americans in his Reeperbahn gaming room. I guess they were more interested in girls than gambling, or he might have felt the same pinch the English did before they fought fire with fire.

"This is my lucky day," I smiled at Helmut as he shoved my winnings into a bag for cashing. I tossed a couple of chips at the boxman. "Mind if I take these dice along? They're like a lucky charm to me."

The boxman glanced at Helmut, who shrugged. I am sure Von Horstmann had a big supply of crooked dice. One more pair meant little or nothing to him. I dropped the dice in my handbag.

From the gaming rooms we wandered into a black velvet and lounge-seated theatre. It was not a large theatre, it held perhaps a hundred people. It was air-conditioned and sound-proof.

"We have a new film from Argentina," Helmut told me. "Would you care to see it? It is far above the level of your so-called stag movie."

I shrugged. "Why not? It isn't often I get to see movies like that." As a matter of strict fact, I had only seen one dirty movie, ever before. It had been badly produced, badly filmed, badly done.

I settled myself to be thoroughly bored.

The film was in color, good color. It was clear and sharp. The title was *Date Night in the Suburbs*. A good orchestra was playing soft music on the sound track.

Helmut whispered "I have not seen this one myself."

The music flared as the camera panned in on a bathroom shower, where a woman was soaping herself very painstakingly. The bathroom was a handsome one, the impression being given that this was a well-to-do home where the lady of the house was readying herself for bed. One caught

glimpses of a fleshy buttocks as she bent over, of legs that were extremely handsome, of a shower cap and a pale white back.

A voice called out in German, a girl's voice.

"Her daughter is going out on a date," Helmut translated.

The woman came out of the bath shower, wet and dripping. She was in her late thirties, maybe her early forties, but she was slim and quite obviously a Spanish type with black hair that tumbled down about her shoulders as she drew off her shower cap.

She began toweling herself.

The door chimes jangled. The woman looked surprised and reached for a cotton robe. Her heavy breasts shook loosely as she thrust her arms into the sleeves. The thin cotton clung to her still damp body, showing flesh tints. She pushed her feet into dainty bedroom slippers.

The robe was a size too small for her, and came open as she moved through her bedroom toward the stairs. The audience was able to see a broad panel of her body that included her inner thighs, the dark patch of womanhood, her navel and the full, jouncing breasts.

Holding the robe about her nudity, she opened the front door to a young man in his late teens. He was, as the German voices proclaimed and Helmut translated, a friend of her daughter. He had made a mistake in his dates, he had thought he had a date with the girl, which was for the next night.

The mother invited him in, she explained that her daughter was out but that she herself was lonely, she would be happy to entertain him. The young man was only too eager to come in. As the woman seated herself, he let his eyes rove over the robe where it clung wetly to her brown nipples. He studied her shapely white legs where they were crossed so that the robe fell away from her upper thigh. The young man began to move uncomfortably in the easy chair where he was sitting.

The woman smiled, she offered him drinks, she made them strong. The young man stared at the backs of her legs where the short robe revealed them up to the middle of her plump thighs as she bent over before the liquor cabinet.

They drank, she turned on the stereo set and dance music came on the sound track. The woman asked him if he liked to dance. He took her into his arms and they began to move about the room in a dreamy fox trot.

She smiled up at him, saying, "You're a good dancer."

"It is you who make me seem so," he smiled back.

The dance music changed to an American watusi. They drew away from each other and now the robe revealed itself as being far too small for the older woman. As she moved her body in the arms-jerking dance, the blue cotton opened so that the boy could see her naked breasts where they jiggled and shook.

Soon the robe was open all the way.

The youth lunged for her, caught her in his arms. He pressed his lips clumsily to hers. The woman laughed softly, telling him not to be in such a rush. The camera dollied in on open lips and a kiss that must have shaken them to their toenails.

The woman laughed and began unbuttoning his shirt. She moved her big breasts against him when he was naked to his middle. She told him she was all alone, she was a widow and she liked young men.

She dropped the robe and began dancing stark naked. In a moment the young man was lowering his trousers and shorts to the floor. He was tremendously aroused. The woman feigned fear at sight of his manhood, she asked him if he had ever taken her daughter.

He claimed he was a virgin.

The woman danced closer. Her hands went to his chest and down his front. The youth gasped and stopped dancing. He began to shake, he begged the woman to stop what she was doing.

"I adore young men," she whispered, reaching to cup him while he groaned a very real groan "They are always such bulls! My older men friends—pah! All they think of is work and money."

She sank to her knees before him and lifted her breasts in her palms as she inched closer to his rigid manhood. The camera slid upward to the youthful face that was so grotesquely contorted. He was gasping, mouth wide open, eyes staring blindly.

There are many women who enjoy sex with men young enough to be their sons. Joseph and Potiphar's wife, Oedipus and Jocasta, Queen Joanna of Naples, Catherine the Great and her virile young guardsmen, history is full to these case histories of mature women accepting youths as their lovers. Honore de Balzac has made the point in his *Danger of Being Too Innocent*, in which the older woman teaches the youthful bridegroom and the father instructs the bride.

Psychiatry might say that these women have the maternal instinct so developed that they must treat their lover as the son they never had, or having had, have failed him in some manner, leaving guilt associations. They seek to lose these guilts in pleasing their psychic sons by becoming as mistresses to him.

And the young men who enjoy the embraces of these older women? Are they guilty too, of an Oedipus complex? Not all, certainly; there is a socio-economic factor involved, for the older woman represents security and refuge to a youth at loggerheads with his world. Yet the hint of incest is present, many times, in an affair which becomes a wish fulfillment.

The older woman plays the role of teacher in these alliances. It is the woman with sexual experience who knows what to do, how to guide the young lover along those methods and mores at which an older man might balk. The young are always daring, filled with the lust for innovation and experiment; the old are set in their ways, wanting only what they know best.

Moreover, the youth has the traditional virility of the bull, the stallion. He is never content with one embrace. There must be many, as varied and as unusual as the woman can dream up.

The naked woman on her knees before her daughter's young friend was certainly filled with innovations. Her breasts and their activity were revealed for the viewer in perfect color, in perfect camera reproduction. None of your spotty movie work here; this was art of a high degree.

The camera slipped from the breasts to the red-nailed hands that went up the muscular hairy thighs to the straining buttocks, caressing, stroking. The gasps were louder, now. The male hips began to shove back and forth.

There was a giggle, a laugh, as the woman broke away, rising to her feet, putting her white arms about his neck. The lens slid around behind the woman now, and the reader could interpret her actions from the manner in which her meaty thighs slid together, as her soft white buttocks shook to the rotary movements of her hips.

Slowly, hesitantly, the male hands moved across that fleshy white back to the pallid buttocks. They were fearful, those hands, but they gained more courage as the woman began to moan and cling the tighter. As was the youth, so were his hands. I thought it was artistry of a high order. The male fingers dug deep into soft female flesh.

"No more," she whispered, pushing away. "Not yet, not here!"

She caught him by the hand and lead him into the hall and up the stairs to her bedroom, asking if he would do what she told him.

"Anything, anything," he kept gasping.

She enjoyed being kissed, she informed him. All over, everywhere. He watched as she sat down on the bed, and leaned back. He put a pillow on the carpet and knelt on it. He began kissing her soft thighs.

The world of "underground movies" is not the world of the movie we were watching. This was a far cry from the occasional bared breast, the male hand fondling the female buttock. It is realism carried to its *nth* degree, and made by men accomplished in their art.

There is always a market for erotica. It is as universal as a man and a woman, needing only money to come to life. The rajahs of India, the industrial barons of the Continent, the wealthy in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas can afford to indulge their peccadillos in such fashion. Commercial operations like the Pleasure Dome are steady customers for these blue movies.

With the lowering of certain former taboos, the intellectuals have become interested in the art. At the same time they have raised the level of the stag movie from something that was once shot in a garage to a production that, for camera techniques, might hold its own with films exhibited by the finest moviemakers in the world.

Japan has its eroductions, which have served to keep its

movie industry in the black at a time when it is engaged in a life and death struggle with television. The moviemakers who do not produce these erotic cheapies are beginning to go under.

But even the eroduction could not be as explicit as the film I was staring at with wide eyes and pounding heart. At least, I don't think so. For the young man was crouched on hands and knees on the bed above the naked woman, kissing her white inner thighs, sliding his mouth and tongue upward. The woman was crying out, little gasps and sounds that served to intensify the dynamism of the picture itself.

A kiss on her quivering belly, kisses and soft drawings upon her tumid brown nipples, lips that surrounded the maternal breast, that hid the nipples in a gentle suction. Slim white fingers caught his hair, directing his head. Hot whispers filled the sound track.

"Yes, darling—oh yes. Down a little—even farther, love. Wait, let me. . . ."

The young man crouched between the wideflung thighs in an attitude of worship. He was the neophyte before the goddess, the male adoring the female. He was eternal man bowed low before the femininity which wagged his little world, the acknowledgment of man that it is to the woman he owes so much. The *Eternal Idol* of Auguste Rodin in flesh and blood.

Shades of Thomas Edison, who invented the moving picture! Well, the master genius himself had filmed *The Kiss* back in 1895. This was an up-beat, modern generation version of that original flick, done in color and with sound added. It was artistic realism.

A hand touched his moving head. "Turn, darling. . . ."

The youth swung about, bent to his task. And now the woman became the priestess of Priapea, the celebrant of the phallic mysteries, the bacchante, the voyager to Phoenicia. The camera was there to record their body worship, their give and take.

"*Soixante-neuf*," breath Helmut, as if I didn't know.

The only sounds in our ears now were the sounds of love-making, intensified somewhat beyond the norm, but extremely effective. Sound and sight gathered you up and plunged you into erotica in one dimension.

Youth and matron moved and now the woman accepted the young man on her back, with widespread thighs. They moved, they kissed, they were not so much celluloid characters as a sex-starved matron and a male virgin. They did not draw the line where the skinpix and the eroductions did.

They went on and on, turning this way and that, letting the camera zoom-lens in for closeups. I risked a glance at Helmut, who was reacting in typical male fashion, though he strove not to show it.

The camera was panning past the two naked bodies at the door. The door opened slowly and a pretty girl thrust her face in. Her features registered shock for a moment, then amusement. Her tongue came out to lick her lips. She reached behind her and now a young man came to stand behind her. Obviously, this was daughter and her date.

The young man began to undress the daughter. His fingers worked at her blouse, opening it, sliding it down her arms so he might unhook the brassiere. Her firm young breasts stood out naked as he drew the bra away from them.

The young woman was lifting her skirt up to bare shapely stockinged legs, pale thighflesh and—

The screen went dead.

"*Verdammt!*" whispered Helmut.

Even though the little theatre was soundproof, I could hear popping sounds from outside. Helmut glanced at me.

"Gunshots?" I breathed.

He nodded and pushed past me, saying with a wry smile, "I am not quite—presentable. But under the circumstances. . . ."

His hand pushed open the theatre door. I had my gun-bracelet—David had brought it with him to London, along with other assorted weapons like my dice earrings—but other than this single weapon, I was unarmed.

And I wanted very much to be armed. Because those loud popping sounds we had heard so indistinctly in the theatre I could now identify as gunshots indeed. Men were yelling, screaming. Feet were pounding the hallways.

"It cannot be a Black Gang raid," Helmut muttered. "The Black Gang has been disbanded, its members put in jail by the police."

I remembered the Black Gang and its alleged leader,

Paul Muller, that had terrorized the Herberstrasse for so long a time. These gangsters were tough and cruel, they insisted on a cut the American percentage—of all the action in the Reeperbahn. They manhandled anyone and everyone who stood in their path, they were demigods in an Alsatian den.

Now they were gone. The Hamburg security police had done for them, and the vicious extortion schemes, the brutal beatings, were a thing of the past. Ah, but if the Black Gang members were in jail, who then was staging this attack on the Pleasure Dome? I thought I knew.

"H.A.T.E.," I whispered, tightening my grip on the gun-bracelet.

Helmut sucked in his breath. His blue eyes were stabbing question marks. "You think so? Yes, it could be. They have been nosing around for the past month or two. I have felt it, I have seen one or two of them."

A man came running down the hall. He had a gun in his hand. The gun lifted. My gun-bracelet was up and aiming before he could trigger his weapon. I put a neat red hole in his shirtfront from which the blood was spreading pretty fast as he fell face down.

Helmut whispered a Teutonic oath.

"Isn't there any way out of here without bumping into more of those goons?" I wondered out loud.

"Dumbkopf that I am. Of course! Follow, please!"

He led me at a gallop down the hall, my mini-skirt up to my hips for freer action. The hell with the show I put on. Maybe the sight of my nylons and pale thighmeat would distract a H.A.T.E. man long enough for me to use my gun-bracelet again.

In through a door and down some stairs. Out another door and along a hall. Footsteps thundered all around us, there were the sounds of shots. My heart was up in my mouth, nudging my tongue for room.

We slammed through another door into a big room that held a hundred or more tables and a big pit filled with oozing mud. So this was where the girl wrestlers put on their performances! Whenever I think of the Reeperbahn, I automatically think of semi-nude girls wrestling one another, all over greenish mud.

Helmut skidded. The door to one side of us was opening and half a dozen H.A.T.E. thugs came bullyroaring through. They roared at sight of us, I know that.

My dear little gun-bracelet came up. It spit twice. Two men went down. The four others came on. Three of them leaped at Helmut. The more fools, they.

I let my man begin his swing at my face. Then I lashed out with my left foot, catching him on the front of a knee, at the same moment grabbing for his swinging arm. I bent the arm, half turning, and chopped down with the edge of my hand. There was a loud snap.

The man screamed. Part of his humerus bone was sticking out of bleeding flesh. I whirled, forgetting him to fasten my hands on one of the three hoods beating up on Helmut.

I wasted no time on niceties. I chopped his neck with a hand-edge, I turned him and drove two fingers at his eyes. He screamed shrilly, like a wounded horse.

I saw one man had his back turned to me. I Gogolaked my foot up between his thighs. He shuddered, he went rigid. And then he yelped once and fell own onto his knees and then his front, his body pumping crazily to the pain that ate in him.

Helmut was on his back and his last assailant was coming for me. I tried a floating loin throw, but he barreled into me, tearing loose my grips. He was a big, heavyset man. His weight caromed me backwards off my feet.

I landed on my spine in ozzing mud. There was a splash, some of the mud splattered up from me and onto his face and chest. My back was wet but his face was wetter and half hidden under that greenish ooze which dripped from his nose, forehead and chin.

His eyes had shut automatically against the mud. I have been trained to react at lightning speed so I kicked at his inner thigh with my right foot, grabbed his coatsleeve with my left arm and rammed my palm against the left side of his throat. He rolled over like a baby.

My knees rammed into his belly, my hands caught his coat and shirt and crossed in the *Nami Juji Jime* so that my wrists were pressing into his throat. The idea here is not to keep your opponent from breathing by cutting off his air supply, but to halt the flow of blood to the brain. I leaned

my weight on his thick neck and pressed my crossed wrists into his throat.

He made gurgling, gasping sounds. His big hairy hands came up to clutch my wrists but all my weight was behind those crossed forearms. He tugged but he could do very little. His head went back, deeper into the mud.

The green ooze was up over his ears. It squished and gurgled, moving across his cheeks. His eyes were wide, staring up at me, and there was fear and horror deep inside them. I pushed down harder.

"No," he whimpered. "*Herr Gott -nein!*"

The mud came up into his open mouth. He started choking. It slid into his eyes. He was making a gargling sound deep inside his throat. Under me he was flopping like a gaffed fish but my thighs had spread to cover his body as soon as I secured my crossed-wrists hold, and he could not dislodge me.

His head went deeper. Only his quivering nostrils showed, then they too disappeared. The green ooze bubbled a couple of times and was still. I was spread-eagled against a dead man.

I scrambled to my feet, took a slippery step and almost went down again in the mud. I waved my arms to recover my balance and saw Helmut sitting there on the floor, staring at me with wide eyes.

"You killed them all," he whispered.

His blue eyes looked up at me worshipfully. I guess there is something in the Teuton soul that admires strength and courage. Maybe he was thinking I was Brunhilde come to life, or Penthasilea, who was queen of the Amazons.

"There may be more," I told him.

He got to his feet like a trained athlete, catching my hand and drawing me with him. "There is a secret passage nearby—which we discovered when we widened these lower floors of the Pleasure Dome. This way, please."

He was suddenly far more subservient than he had been. I guess he thought if he didn't behave himself I might use some of my judo on him. He ran toward what looked like a blank wall. His fingers pressed an invisible mark.

A section of the wall swung back.

There was a narrow stone walkway before us, like a cor-

ridor with an arched roof. The air in here was damp, and when the wall swung shut behind us, it was black as the inside of a mole's belly.

The hand caught my fingers, drew me gently in its wake. "Where are we?" I whispered.

"In the ruins of an old abbey. The picks of our workmen dug into this tunnel when they were widening the mud pit room. Herr von Horstmann did some research and concluded this must be the underground cellars of what was once the abbey of Saint Ansgar, that was burned down in the ninth century along with the town itself."

Helmut halted. "Wait, please. There are flashlight stored here."

I waited in the blackness, listening to the sound of wood on wood, and then an electric lamp was making a brightness in the dark. I could see the dampness of the tunnel walls and the dry cobbles underfoot. Helmut handed me one of the flashlights.

"We have about half a mile to go. I do not think we shall be discovered but it is best to proceed cautiously."

He went ahead swiftly, on silent feet. I came tiptoeing after him, shivering a little to the dampness and the cold. A little breeze flushed the tunnels; there must be a number of airholes located here and there, I figured. The mud was still wet on me, I felt gooey and icky. I would have given almost anything for a tub of hot water and some soap.

We had gone about three hundred yards when I heard a sound.

I reached out, caught Helmut by a shoulder. "Listen!" I whispered. We froze. I could feel his muscles tensing under my hand.

It came again, a low sound, vibrant with pain.

A man was moaning, somewhere here in the dark.

I must confess the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. I began to shake. It was like listening to the groanings of a ghost. The monk of the North, after whom this abbey had been named? I nudged my blonde companion.

"Let's go see who it is," I told him.

His flashlight sent its beam here and there, until it discovered a narrow archway. We crept toward it like scared kids. I was ready to bolt and run for it and the hell with

the noise, if the reality were anything like what my imagination was conjuring up.

The light splashed across damp walls, over rusting chains linked to rivets set into the stone. A man hung half naked in manacles attached to those chains.

I gasped.

It was Herr von Horstmann!

Or—was it?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Helmut was rigid in shock.

"*Gott in Himmel*," he breathed. "It cannot be."

I pushed past him, sank to my knees beside this man. There was a full week's growth of beard on his chin, he was unkempt, he was foul with his own excretions. He was not the Wolfgang von Horstmann I had met a couple of hours ago.

Helmut realized it, too. He fell to his knees beside the man, touching him gently, asking, "What happened, Herr von Horstmann? Who did this to you?"

The cracked lips whispered, "H.A.T.E. They caught me by surprise, they brought me here, they—tortured me. Ah, *Gott*—what I have suffered."

I could see his flesh hanging in bloody strips where they had whipped him. I shivered, thinking of how this must

have hurt. But von Horstmann was a Prussian of the old school, he was hard as nails. He had endured.

He cackled laughter. "I told them—nothing! The pigs could not prove I knew what I know and so—they left me for a little while. But they will be back." His head lifted suddenly and he looked at us.

"Helmut! Good boy, you have found me. Perhaps you can get me out of this place. I think—the rats—are worst. They are very hungry and my legs so weak they cannot move and. . . ."

I played the flashlight beam across what the rats had left of his feet. I began to retch.

"Who is she?" the old man asked.

"From L.U.S.T." Helmut said.

"Ahhh, L.U.S.T., yes. L.U.S.T. is the enemy of H.A.T.E. and I despise H.A.T.E. and what it stands for. Humanitarian Alliance—bah!"

Helmut and I were working on his manacles. They were locked and we did not have the key, but daddy had taught his little girl all there was to know about locks. I reached into my handbag, lifted out a pen, unscrewed the top and then the bottom—and now a glittering length of blue steel projected from it in place of the ink container.

I slid the steel tongue into the lock. I worked it back and forth. The manacle fell apart even as Helmut whispered an awed curse. The other manacle did not take so long.

The blonde young man bent, heaving the broken von Horstmann up on a shoulder in a fireman's hitch. I trotted along beside them.

My mind, I must confess, was at sixes and sevens.

If this were the real Wolfgang von Horstmann, who in the name of the Nine Unknowns was the man upstairs? H.A.T.E. substitute, yes. But if that was so, why was H.A.T.E. attacking its own man? It made no sense, it was madness.

I asked Helmut to explain but he was as puzzled as I. The broken man lying across his shoulders cackled laughter.

"Do you know?" I asked him.

"Ja—I know. Helmut, good boy—put me down. I am dying anyhow, a few more moments of life do not matter that much to me."

Helmut lowered him, with my help, to the tunnel floor a few feet from where it became stone steps mounting upward. We propped him up with his back to a stone wall of the abbey tunnel.

He sighed, closing his eyes. We crouched over him in utter silence while some of his strength came back to him.

"There is some sort of revolt going on inside H.A.T.E.," he said softly. "It is led by an East German by the name of Willi Vogel. It is very wide, that rift in their ranks. Vogel is attempting to discredit the present leader of the organization. This—what happened to me—is part of that attempt."

H.A.T.E. had a man who was almost the exact double of Herr von Horstmann readied to take his place. This man had studied von Horstmann until he could imitate him to perfection: mannerisms, voice, inflections, the whole bit. This false Pleasure Dome owner was to feed L.U.S.T. and the western world fake information, dummied-up reports and microfilms.

The light dawned in my head.

"Then—the microfilm that eventually wound up in England on its way to L.U.S.T. headquarters is false?"

"Ja. It is false. There will be grave consequences for anyone who is guided by whatever is in the microfilm."

"But what's it about—the microfilm, I mean?"

"I do not know. *Nein*, I can only guess it means death for anyone who seeks to use the information contained in it."

"What about the real microfilm?"

His smile was ghastly as a ripple of agony moved through his body. His head, braced against the stones, rolled back and forth. "Still with—my contact in—Innsbruck."

"I must get hold of it," I told him.

"He is a ski instructor at Innsbruck. His name is Otto Karpf. The password is a limerick. Listen! 'There was a young girl named Marie, Who schussed along on one ski. She sought to slalom. But she fell on her bum. And what a cold heinie has she.' Will you be able to remember it?"

"Yes, I think so." I answered, repeating the silly doggerel over and over to myself.

The old man growled, "Nobody knows that limerick but my contact and me. Now you two know. Girl, you can trust

Helmet, he has been as a son to me. He will get you out of here, he will see you have whatever it is you need. He will inherit my *Pleasure Dome*."

Helmut muttered something in gratitude. The old man smiled, waved a hand. "No thanks. You have earned what you are getting. You are as desperate as I am that the culture of our Eastern neighbors shall not overrun the west. Keep that goal always before you, boy."

The tired old eyes closed. The real von Horstmann was far older than the man who had taken his place. I felt pity for him. I wished I could do something to help.

He smiled as if to secret thoughts. "Young lady, you must beware H.A.T.E. in its power struggle. They are ruthless at best, now when there is a schism in their ranks, they will become monsters."

He drew a deep breath. "Be careful of my Helmut. He is a good man. I do not want him to fall into the hands of H.A.T.E."

"He won't," I vowed.

Helmut whispered, "She knows how to fight to kill, this one, herr. She saved my life a little while ago."

"*Gut, gut,*" He opened his eyes and stared at me. "This false microfilm which my double gave to the baroness?"

I told him it was hidden somewhere in the Downes manor house, to the best of my belief. "H.A.T.E. cannot find it. But that is something I don't understand, sir. If H.A.T.E. gave the microfilm to the baroness. . ."

"Somehow, H.A.T.E. learned when I was to meet my contact, though they do not know his identity. Before I could meet him, I was attacked, brought down here and tortured. Now the true H.A.T.E. group planned this trick, to pawn off on L.U.S.T. the deadly microfilm. Our enemy Willi Vogel, the ringleader of the rebels—who is competing for the leadership in H.A.T.E.—killed Eric Downes in such a manner that it would seem the real H.A.T.E. leader had ordered it."

The plan was simplicity itself. By blaming his real boss, Willi Vogel hoped to discredit him and take his place. If he had the real microfilm, he might even have made sure I got my pretty hands on it. He did not have it, and presumably could not get it.

As a result, he had to make do with what he could. He and his men had searched for the false microfilm, intending to substitute the real one for it when they finally got possession of it, and so bring a charge of incompetence—or worse—against the leader. But I had foiled that attempt.

Now Willi and his cronies were hot-foot after me to get the real microfilm into their hands. I wondered if the true leaders of H.A.T.E. would ever appreciate what I was doing for them.

The old man died suddenly, his mouth open on a breath. There was a watery sound deep in his throat, his lips relaxed from their grimace of pain. His head went back into the stones of the tunnel wall.

Helmut stared down at him, shivering. I reached out, touched his arm. "We'd better get cracking. The fight upstairs won't be lasting this long. Somebody may come down here."

He nodded, whispering, "He was like a father to me, practically adopted me when I was a young boy. He hired a tutoress to make sure I did my studies, he sent me to the finest schools."

Helmut got to his feet. "*Auf weidesehn*," he breathed.

Then he caught my hand, drew me toward and up the stairs into a circular chamber. His hand went to a brightly shining bolt, drew it back. A door swung inward on oiled hinges. I could see a thick fall of vines outside. Helmut poked his head through the vines.

"It is night, but I must be sure there is no one around," he told me, gesturing me to follow.

We ran down the slope of a little park.

"We may have to walk to my place," Helmut told me. "There will be H.A.T.E. men crawling all around the Pleasure Dome and the parking areas."

"Look, why don't we go to my place? I'm staying at the Crown Prince. It isn't too far from here, I imagine."

"No, probably about a mile."

This section of the Sankt Pauli district is inland from the dock area and what once used to be the ropeway from which the Reeperbahn draws its name. The main drag of this renowned sin street is only half a mile long. Its blazing neon lights made the night look like day off to our left as we half-ran, half-trotted along a parallel avenue.

I saw—but paid no attention to—a parked car with two men seated in it. It was just one more car to me. My brain recorded the fact that it was big and black, a Mercedes-Benz. Because I have been trained to do these things, many times I find I have been making observations about which I have no recollection until much later.

Helmut and I ran on.

Just as we were about to turn into the main entrance of my hotel, I looked front, back and sideways. Then I saw the big black Mercedes-Benz a second time. Warning bells went off in my head.

"Keep going," I breathed to Helmut.

He was fast on the uptake, that boy. He never slackened speed. We went down two blocks, turned into a somewhat darker side street. I pushed Helmut against a wall, yanked off my gun-bracelet.

The car began its turn into the side street. The window to the suicide seat beside the driver was open. A man was leaning out. I put a bullet smack between his little pig-eyes. The driver swerved, but I was off and running.

The driver was fighting to control his car. It had slowed almost to a crawl so that I was able to keep the H.A.T.E. man in view as I ran closer.

My gun-bracelet made a pleasant weight in my hand. It is a massy thing, very heavy, of steel overlaid with 14 karat gold. It is a masterpiece of the gunsmith's craft. It fires a .25 calibre bullet from the flat head which is roughly 3 inches by 2 inches and raised upward from the circular part of the bracelet so that it makes a very compact gun. The head is ornamented with certain passages from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. I have often wondered who the joker was who selected those hieroglyphics for such a lethal ornament. He had a real ravey sense of humor.

My feet slid to a halt. The car was barely crawling.

I lifted the gun-bracelet, aiming at the driver.

He was just bringing a Mauser pocket pistol out of his shoulder holster when I got him in the throat. His head went back and my, God! the blood! His body flopped crazily, up and down and from side to side as if he were a straw man on puppet strings.

The car scraped a brick wall.

I was halfway down the block, running neck and neck

with Helmut. His face was flushed, his eyes were glassy, but he ran like an Olympic sprinter. He got a little ahead of me, then slowed.

"Where to now?" he panted.

"Around the corner, back onto the street. We'll play it—as if we were—just out for a stroll."

The gun-bracelet is equipped with a tiny silencer, built into the mechanism. When it goes off, there is a loud pop like somebody smashing a paper bag bulging full of air. In the noises of a large city like Hamburg, with luck it might go undetected.

Nobody stopped us. Nobody even looked at us.

In ten minutes my hotel room door was closing behind us. Helmut pushed a linen handkerchief back and forth across his forehead. I felt limp as I staggered to the bed and sprawled over it, front up, my legs dangling over the edge.

"Wheee," I breathed.

"You are a super-woman," Helmut murmured, coming to stare down on my reclining self. His blue eyes were calf-like as they studied me, the eyes of a man who worships what he sees. They made me feel funny.

"Yeah, me and Diana Prince," I smiled.

I was bone-tired. My long days were getting longer, it seemed, and my working hours were crammed full with peril and pleasure. It took something out of a girl, this job of earning a living by being a secret agent. I remembered I was supposed to be on vacation.

Helmut was lighting a cigarette. "What do we do now?"

"We go find that ski instructor at Innsbruck."

"Ah, of course—but when?"

I smiled up at him. He was a handsome young thing, all sun-bronzed face and vivid blonde hair, close-cropped to his skull. His neatly pressed suit was scarcely rumpled at all, even after what he'd been through. There was a faint bulge along one trouser-leg which made me wonder a little.

"Soon, but not now," I told him. "I have to rest."

"Even goddesses are mortal, it seems," he said with something like religious ecstasy in his throat.

He went to a knee, he caught my slippered foot, slid off my shoe and began massaging my stockinged foot. It felt

good, I told him so. His handsome head bent. I felt his lips on my toes.

I must admit to a little tingle that ran across my flesh. I had never been with a foot fetishist such as Restif de la Bretonne had written about. His lips were gentle, caressing. I let my eyes glaze over as I stared up at the ceiling.

"You are of the 'new race' which Hitler foresaw, for which he tried to prepare the world," he whispered

Oh, brother! I thought. This is a real sprain-brain.

"Let me serve you," he went on. "Let me be your slave."

I began to see dear Helmut in a new light. He was not the foot worshipper, he was something else. I decided to test my new theory about him.

"Helmut, a slave must obey his mistress," I pointed out, and felt his hands tremble where they held my foot.

"Yes, yes. Just give the orders, mistress."

"We cannot remain here. Those dead men outside will have the police and H.A.T.E., too—flocking around the hotel. They have nothing to go on, it might be difficult for me to check out at this time. Yet—we have to go to Innsbruck."

"Yes, mistress."

"You have an apartment? A house? Somewhere to hide us until we make the arrangements."

"I have a house left me by my parents."

I thought a moment "Is the address on record in the Pleasure Dome files? Would H.A.T.E. be able to trace you there?"

He gasped, then nodded. "Yes. I did not think of that. You see how much the 'new woman' you are? Your mind is far beyond the merely human brain "

It was nice to be complimented, but I could spare no time now for such fripperies. I had to be up and out. With Helmut's help, yet.

"Helmut, tell me all this boy-girl talk later. Right now, we've got to get the hell out of here—to some place safe. So tell me—where can we go?"

His blue eyes stared at me helplessly.

I was propped up on my elbows. I smiled down at him. "No can do? Then let me give you a hint. Von Horstmann

must have had a house, an apartment. He is dead, there will be no one to interfere with us. Right?"

The absolute adoration in his eyes was embarrassing. I kicked him tenderly. His torso was hard as rock. The boy did exercises, I told myself.

"Do you agree?" I asked. "Yes, I see you do."

"I should have thought of it myself. Usually, I am most efficient. I do not understand."

"Prove it. Go pack my tote bag for me. I'll tell you what I want." I began ticking off things on my fingers. My dice earrings. The lace panties with the rosebuds on them. "And be careful how you handle those panties, Helmut. Each rosebud decoration is a bomb. My bikini blow-ups, so to speak. I'll wear my dear little gun-bracelet to make sure it's ready in case we need it."

Helmut packed my tote bag. I would dearly have loved to take a shower—I was still pretty muddy from that ooze bath I'd had back in the wrestling pit—but I would have to settle for a change of clothing.

I held up my arm. Helmut caught it, lifted me to my stockinged feet. I bent and yanked my cashmere sweater off. Helmut stared, mouth open, at my breasts where they made soft white bulges in the sheer nylon brassiere that was like a white mist over the dark nipples.

I looked down where my blonde boy friend was staring and saw that there were flecks of mud on the bra, too. Off came the brassiere. I told Helmut where he could find a fresh one. He selected a Surprise brassiere in black nylon.

I took it from him, bent to let my female treasures dangle, then eased the cups up over them and slipped my arms through the straps. Helmut hooked it for me. It was nice having a man about the house.

I pushed down the skirt, stepped out of it. My panties were just as sheer as the bra had been, so Helmut had himself an interesting look at my golden privacy. The panties were spotless, so there was no need to change them. However, since they did not match the bra Helmut had chosen for me, I decided I'd better match them up.

So I slid the panties down.

The boy friend went to his knees. "You are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen." He reached out to catch my hips and draw me toward him.

I put my hands on his cheeks, holding him back. "Later, honey. Right now duty is calling loud and clear."

"Even in this you are superior," he muttered.

He brought me panties to match the black nylon bra—tiny, wispy bikinis that struggled to hide my more intimate parts—and watched me as I slid my legs into them and wiggled them up over my 35 inch hips. My garterbelt was clean but the stockings were—yeeecch! So I sat down on the edge of a chair and ungartering the vamp, slid them down and off.

I donned a fresh pair of Cantreze Ivories, smoothing them up my calves and thighs until they made a perfect fit. Helmut was drinking me in, staring pop-eyed. It is very flattering to a woman to be worshipped by a male in this manner. It almost made me forget Uncle Sam wanted me.

I eased my bod into a pleated tent dress and a pair of high-heeled shoes. I reached for the tote bag.

"We'll slip out the back way," I told him.

It was ridiculously easy. There was a uniformed policeman standing at the rear entrance, but he paid us no attention. Helmut hailed a taxi. We settled back with sighs of relief.

Wolfgang von Horstmann had maintained a private house in the exclusive Othmarschen section just outside Hamburg. Helmut ordered the taxi to pull to the curb a block away, figuring that if anyone were to question the driver, he would not be able to pinpoint the exact house.

As the taxi drew away, we strolled casually down the block. It was dawn. Redness splashed a fan over the eastern sky, and a faint hush lay across the world. It was good to be alive, I thought, drawing the cool morning air deep into my lungs. H.A.T.E. was out there somewhere, hunting for me. It was my job to keep them off my pretty white neck. Danger always adds a touch of spice to my way of life.

Helmut squeezed my fingers. "Now!" he breathed.

We ran up the drive, the big blonde man fumbling for keys in a pocket. In a moment we were inside a room that was furnished sparsely but with excellent taste. The room was dim, nor did Helmut turn on lights.

"H.A.T.E. will have searched this house already," he told me. "It will be our safest hideout in all Hamburg. They will never dream you have fled here."

"You think we're really safe, then?"

"Oh, yes. We can be quite at ease."

I tossed the tote bag into a chair. "Then me for a nice hot bath. I feel as if I'd been wallowing in mud—which I have. I want to get it washed off."

"Let me draw your bath. Come this way."

The upstairs bathroom was an Eljer masterpiece in white and blue. Wooden cabinets encased a sink, enclosed a huge sunken bathtub. I squealed with delight when I saw the bronze fixtures, the thick, fuzzy white rugs on the tiled floor. This place had been made for a girl like me.

I whipped my tent dress over my head. Helmut turned, staring, "Let me," he pleaded.

He got to his feet, came to stand behind me.

"You like waiting on women, don't you?" I asked as he unhooked bra snaps.

"Yes. Years ago my mother and my two older sisters used to let me undress them and help to dress them again. I was eight or nine at the time."

My bra slipped down. Helmut knelt, unfastening my garterclasps from the stocking tops. His hands were quivering.

"It's been a long time, hasn't it?"

He nodded, leaning to kiss my upper thigh. "A long time, *Ja!* I have never been so happy as I used to be when waiting on my womenfolk."

I thought a while, then asked, "Was it a form of punishment, Helmut?"

"*Ja*—at first. I was always a big boy, strong, independent. The strap never bothered me. My mother was a widow, she could not handle me the way a father might have done."

"You told me you were an orphan."

"My mother and sisters were killed in an auto accident when I was thirteen. It was then that Von Horstmann found me, took me under his wing. But by then my fetishism, if you can call it that, was firmly fixed."

"At first I hated what I was made to do. I refused. My mother and my sisters would attack me, all three of them. I would put up a good fight but I would get a funny feeling wrestling with them, so that I could not fight as I might have fought against three men."

He sighed, drawing a stocking off my leg.

"I do not know when I first began to enjoy the menial service, perhaps it was that very first night when I was compelled to undress my two sisters, who were sixteen and fifteen at the time. They were both very beautiful. I had never seen an undressed woman before. I—enjoyed the experience very much. Very much.

"I think my mother knew what was happening, but she only smiled her secret little smile. She was a beautiful woman too, even more beautiful than my sisters. She had long blonde hair, she was slim but very developed. She held a switch in her hand, she would slap it across my behind when I hesitated. She did not have to use it often, once I got the girls partially disrobed. I had begun to discover the possibilities."

His hands drew away my garterbelt. The tub was filled with steaming water. Helmut knelt, catching my hand to support me as I stepped down into that welcome wet warmth. I sank into the water, stretched out in voluptuous enjoyment.

Helmut still knelt, staring at me with shining eyes.

"Did you ever bathe them?" I wondered.

His smile showed even white teeth. "Later. When they understood how much I enjoyed serving them."

"Then strip down and come in here. Lord knows the tub's big enough for the two of us. You can begin by soaping my back."

He left the bathroom to undress, much to my surprise. Then I thought that he might not have been allowed to undress himself before his mother and two sisters. They would have maintained the proprieties, ridiculous as it may seem.

He was not long in returning. I eyed his naked body as frankly as he had stared at mine. He was very tanned, and the muscles across his torso bulged as did the ridges of an old-fashioned washboard. His shoulders were wide, his hips lean. Muscles flexed and relaxed beneath his skin at his every stride.

He came down into the tub with a washcloth and a bar of soap. I bent forward, offering him the white arch of my back, gathering my yellow hair in my fingers and holding it to the top of my skull. I felt a hand smoothing soap across

my flesh, very gently, while his other hand frothed the lather into suds. It was a pleasant feeling, being waited upon by such a strong young man.

I thought about young Helmut Fleischel undressing his mother and his sisters, and then bathing them. Even at twelve years of age, he must have reacted to this nearness to nudity. I wondered if—

"Helmut," I said dreamily as the washcloth went down my sides, "did it give you pleasure to undress and bathe your sisters? I mean, real pleasure?"

"Not at first, but later on when my mother understood me better. She -but I won't tell you that. Not now."

I sat back in the tub while his hands were soaping my front, stirring my nipples to excitement. He asked me to stand so he might slide the furry cloth up and down my legs and across my groin. I was in a pleasant stupor from the warmth and the sensual delight his touches evoked.

Vaguely I was aware that I would reciprocate his attentions, not by washing him but in another way. I stared down at his nakedness as he knelt before me, moving the washcloth. Then I thought of something.

"Helmut?"

"Ja, my mistress?"

"Have you ever been to Innsbruck?"

"Often, for the skiing."

"The skiing season is almost at an end."

"Almost. It will last for a few more weeks."

"And Otto Karpf teaches skiing?"

"He does. You will be taking a lesson, eh?"

"Shall you come with me?"

"I do not think so. I will have to take up where von Horstmann left off. I must put the Pleasure Dome back on its feet, keep open a communication line with the MI5. Herr von Horstmann hated—the other side. So also do I."

He was finished drying me by this time, so I sat on a little stool and watched as he cleaned himself. It was time now to discover how he had achieved his pleasure with his mother and his sisters. I thought and thought, until I felt positive I knew.

I asked, "Is there a cellar to this house?"

His glance touched me, his eyes overly bright, a flush

on his cheeks. He nodded, swallowing, "Ja. A cellar."

"Herr von Horstmann was not a young man," I went on, smiling a little. "He must have needed certain—stimulations?—to ready him for the love act with a woman. Am I getting warm?"

His teeth sank into his lip as he nodded again.

"In the cellar?" I whispered.

"Ja, my mistress."

I stood up. Slipping my feet into the bedroom slippers Helmut had brought for me, and my nakedness into a robe against the cooler air beyond the bathroom, I opened the door.

"I shall call you, Helmut."

He was still standing in the tub, staring at me. Poor boy! He was hoping that I was about to indulge him in his favorite pastime. It was right there in his eyes and flushed face.

There are many men in the world who seek consciously or unconsciously to be dominated by females. There is a need in them for authority to be exercised over them, for them to be able to function as true men. There are many flaws in our psychic make-ups. A psychiatrist once told me there is no such thing as a completely normal person. Everybody has a monkey on his back, of one sort or another.

Helmut Fleischel may have a guilt complex about his boyhood desire for his mother and sisters. The mind is a complex instrument. It is affected by a million and one memories of pain and pleasure, it comes to dominate the body to which it is the control center as Helmut Fleischel liked to be dominated by a female. His memory of the enjoyment he had taken within the bosom of his own family dictated his later behavior patterns.

In the cellar, I found half a dozen bondage machines, to which a man or a woman might be strapped down and held for punishment. I wondered if Herr von Hortsman had ever used these gadgets for questioning a man he suspected of being a H.A.T.E. agent. It was not a pleasant thought, but then I am not engaged in a pleasant business.

The governments of the world are caught up in a global *sub rosa* war, a struggle for power one with the other, a war which reaches the ears of their citizens only in dribs and

drabs, more especially when the lid blows off the activities of a secret agent, as when a British frogman dove a little too close to a Russian vessel and was never heard of again. Or the Profumo trial in London, a few years back.

It is a grim war, with no holds barred. It is not uncommon for these spies to carry poison capsules in their mouths at all times, in the form of a disguised tooth, to be swallowed against the possibility of torture.

I moved across the cellar, studying its wood paneling, its inlaid linoleum floor. It was like a playroom in any one of millions of pleasant homes, back stateside. Only its fittings were different.

There were closets built into one wall. I slid back a door, found myself staring at black leather garments, high boots, frilly shirts. The female dominatrix often wears leather garments, she is turned into the mother image in the minds of many men in such garb. She become a symbol of their helplessness.

I had no liking for such contraptions. I am a female female. I get no kicks out of belting a man. I would gladly have abandoned Helmut Fleischel to his memories, without making them come alive for him.

And yet—

I spoke no German. Helmut did.

I could go alone to Innsbruck, as a tourist. I would make better time as a married woman however, traveling with her husband, because Helmut would be there to smooth matters, to arrange faster transportation. He knew the ropes. He could cut red tape. He would take me directly to the prearranged meeting place between Herr von Horstmann and the ski instructor.

I sighed and reached for a shiny black leather corselet.

At the end of ten minutes, I stood before a mirror, staring at the reflection of a woman perched upon six-inch high heels fitted to patent leather boots that ended high on soft white thighs, the flesh of which protruded over the tops of the boots and shimmied when she moved. A black corselet cloaked her body from the lower belly to just below her breasts, which jutted out boldly above that contrasting blackness.

Golden hair was perched high on her head in an upsweep coiffure that added to her height. She looked like a female

devil-priestess, especially with the whip that trailed from the long handle in her gloved hand. For tight leather elbow gloves were her only other garment.

"Helmut! Helmut—comes here at once!"

Staring at my reflection, I felt a tide of excitement rising in me. My blood beat faster, I felt the flush burn in my cheeks. I was Evil. I was the female Eros. I was Eve-Lilith.

I was The Mistress.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Helmut Fleisher whimpered when he saw me.

His eyes widened, his body shivered, his manhood acknowledged my irresistable femininity, my desirability. He stood naked in the doorway, and he began to sob.

"I'm sorry," he whispered. "Sorry, sorry!"

I moved the whip, I sent it snaking out in a curling length of pleated leather that made a faint snapping noise. I have seen bullwhip experts at work. I have tried my hand with whips such as the one I held. Once in a while I can make that stinging pop in the air.

I popped the whip once. Twice.

The big blonde youth went to his knees before me. He was actually crying, great tears that ran down his cheeks and attested to the fantasy in which he was losing himself. I was his blonde mother, that strange woman who had first decreed he must become a slave to his own family.

He ran toward me, fell on his knees. He kissed the tips of my patent leather boots.

"Helmut," I whispered. "Helmut, you have been wicked."

"*Ja, ja*. Wicked. Wicked!"

"Confess to me, Helmut. Tell me what you have done."

"With Hilda and Helen I kissed them."

"Where did you kiss them, Helmut?"

"On their buttocks, their pretty pink buttocks. They made me do it, they would have hurt me by pulling my hair and spanking me with their hairbrushes. I did not want to do it."

"You lie, Helmut."

He was crouched at my feet, rubbing his forehead across the shiny patent leather of my boots in an agony of abasement. I could see his big strong body shuddering steadily, as if in a fit of the ague.

After a moment he groaned, "*Ja*, I lie. I did want to do it. I am glad they threatened me, glad they made me kiss them there."

"This is very sinful, Helmut."

"I know, mamma."

He was lost in his fantasy. I was no longer Eve Drum, girl spy. I was the dead mother he remembered. Had she dressed this way for him? Was there something of the sadist in the mother as there was a masochistic strain in the son? She may have sported with the father in such manner, before he died. And seeing the son growing into youthful manhood before her eyes may have made her realize that she could indulge herself with him, as well.

She had done with him as the potter does with the wet clay upon the wheel. Her desires, her vagaries, had laid their hold upon his young mind and flesh and made them into that which crouched before me now, shivering with the lusts that rode his body.

I might do as that other woman had done, so long ago.

I reached down, caught his yellow hair, as much of it as I could tangle in my fingers. I yanked his head up while I bent above him, so that my brown nipples were right before his eyes.

I brushed my nipples across his face, back and forth. Helmut was pale with repression and with the hunger that revealed itself by the manner in which his lips opened and

closed, opened and closed. The boys in L.U.S.T. don't call me Oh Oh Sex for nothing. I have an instinct for this sort of thing.

To Helmut, I was his mother.

I slid my thickened nipple between his lips. He cried out softly and began to draw upon it as if he were an infant. My hand stroked his head, I ran my scarlet fingernails about the base of his neck. I tickled him, I teased him.

"You like this, Helmut?" I whispered.

He nodded, his mouth too full to speak.

"It gives you pleasure?"

"Oh, yes," his lips breathed against my wet breast.

"There are many pleasant things you and I can do together, my darling. You must put yourself in my hands, you must be guided by me."

It was getting harder and harder for me to talk. My own flesh was not insensitive to the mouth shifting from one breast to the other, nursing hungrily, almost savagely. I could not ignore the hands sliding up and down my thighs where they lay bare above the high boots. His fingertips grazed my inner thighs, made me shudder with pleasure, then slid around to grip my soft bare buttocks.

His greedy fingers dug in, tightly.

Then his equally greedy lips abandoned my nipples to drop to the black corselet against which he rubbed his flushed cheeks. He was very strong. My hips felt as if they were in a vise. Then he was kissing me below the corselet, running his mouth back and forth along my lower belly. His mouth was like a fire burning me there above my golden puff.

I felt my hips moving. I could not control them.

While I still could, I must get through to him. My fingers touched his head, held it motionless.

"Helmut, dear—listen!"

"Mmmmmhhh. . ."

"You must not stay in Hamburg. Not now."

He leaned back to stare up into my face. Like a child he repeated, "Not stay in Hamburg?"

"Not if I say you are not to stay. Can you understand? You must obey me. Unquestioningly. It is the most important thing you have to remember. Nothing else matters. You must accept my every word as a command."

"I will obey. I will!"

"We are going to take a little trip," I told him.

"Yes, mamma. Yes."

"We are going to Innsbruck. You will make all the necessary arrangements. You will hire a car. You will take care of all the details. You will pretend to be my husband."

His face broke into a radiant smile. His eyes went from my bared loins up across the corselet to my jutting breasts, then to my face. His eyes showed an eerie happiness. I felt a cold chill run down my spine. I was playing games with a human being, with a human mind, I told myself.

I might even, unless I were very careful, shove him over the brink of sanity into madness. I must force myself to keep in mind at all times the fact that there was a strange, forgotten world deep inside the mind of this young German.

I had no need for hypnosis. Helmut was hypnotizing himself. To him, I was the mother he loved.

"I will forgive you if you do this for me, Helmut," I whispered into his shining face.

He nodded, dumbly. "I will do as you say."

"You will take over the Pleasure Dome later, when you return from Innsbruck."

"When I return from Innsbruck."

He put his eyes to the whip dangling from my hand. His tongue touched his lips and then his eyes turned to study my fleshy white thighs where they bulged out above the patent leather boots.

"Don't whip me," he whimpered.

I hesitated, then drew bow at a guess. "Have I always whipped you, Helmut? Have I ever not whipped you?"

He shook his head. But he said, "Except for . . ."

Helmut Fleischel bit his lower lip.

"Except for what?" I prompted.

Like a somnambulist, he answered, "Those last few weeks when we were happiest, mamma. You and me. Not Hilda and Helen. Just the two of us, having fun."

"We left Hilda and Helen out of the things we did together, did we?"

"Yes, mamma. We had no need for them."

I shuddered. I was almost afraid to go on. This big youth was lost in his own mists of memory. He was not kneeling before me, he was on his knees before the woman

who had borne him. I wondered what dark deeds they had done together, the boy and the older woman.

I told myself I was doing this for Uncle Sam.

I had to get to Innsbruck. I must meet Otto Karpf. I had to get my hands on that microfilm.

My heart was thudding in my rib cage. Twice I tried to speak but no words came out. Helmut *must* be my slave! He was the difference between success and failure.

I whispered, swallowing hard, "Shall we play our little game?" I saw him nod and lean back as if waiting for me to begin. I had not the slightest notion of what he expected, so I said, "Tonight you shall lead, my darling."

His eyes touched my face worriedly, but he smiled up at me. "You shall not order me? But that is half the fun, to be ordered about. I love to obey you, you know that. You make me do such nice things for you."

I slapped him hard across his face.

"Stupid boy! I did order you. I told you to begin, that this night you shall lead our little sport."

He took another clap across his other cheek, kneeling before me. He was babbling, "I did not understand. Forgive me. I will do as you say. I will! Please—no more. Don't hit me any more."

He put little force in his words. I knew that he wanted to be whipped, he wanted to be dominated. The masochism in his makeup, that had begun when his mother first punished him, was at flood tide in his body.

He crawled around behind me. He lifted his face, he kissed my bare buttocks. He abased himself, he demeaned himself. His mouth was all over my flesh. I tottered on my high heeled shoes. I found I was growing wildly excited by what he was doing.

I managed to gasp, "Is this what—what Hilda and Helen m-made you do?"

"Yes, yes," he cried between kisses.

"And now that you have done it to me—"

"You will punish me. You will whip me."

My right hand tightened on the whip handle.

"I will punish you," I agreed.

Helmut crawled around in front of me. Kneeling, he turned his naked back to me, bending far forward. I lifted the whip, let the lash trail across his back. I saw him shiver

and begin to moan like a man in ecstasy. His manhood was bloated in excitement.

I stepped back. I brought the whip forward.

The plaited leather laid a raw scarlet streak across his flesh. He did not cry out, he merely bent lower as if to abase himself more completely. From the very earliest times, man has been fascinated by the effect of punishment upon his erotic psyche. The priests of Isis in Egypt beat their flesh with thongs while the sacrificial fires were devouring the body of the victim of the goddess. It was a symbolic sharing of the pain which the victim was expressing in screams of agony. It made the priests holy men because they were offering up their own flesh-pains to Isis along with the sufferings of the actual victim.

The Romans celebrated the feast of the Lupercalia—on February 15 of every year—during which men ran around the streets with willow branches tied in the form of whips. They were free to lash any woman they found with these cutting branches. The idea was that a birching would stimulate their victims so they would be more receptive to sexual relations. I have no doubt they were. Otherwise the habit would have been discontinued a lot sooner than it was.

During the Middle Ages, wandering bands of flagellants might be seen traveling up and down the roads of Provence and Navarre. Each took turns wielding the whip, each was victim, each was flagellant. While their avowed purpose was that of punishment for sins committed, this constant use of lash and thong was guaranteed to rouse and stimulate both sadistic and masochistic desires.

Even today there are whipping clubs to be found in the larger cities of the western world, or in private homes where people have banded together to give vent to their animal natures. She who lashes, he who receives the thongs, are joining in a symbolic copulation.

So it was with Helmut. The plaited leather across his naked back, the red welts streaking his up-turned buttocks, were like the most powerful aphrodisiacs. He turned to let me see how affected he had become.

The sight of his arousal was as a good on my own flesh. I caught him across his upper thighs with the whip, marking him just below his straining flesh.

His body began to jerk back and forth. His lips were drawn away from the teeth that were bared like those of a man in a mad frenzy. He was lost in some memory, sharing with me this action that was something out of his past.

"Mamma, mamma, mamma," he kept whimpering.

He leaped for me, springing up from his kneeling position, as once he must have leaped at his mother, tortured beyond endurance. His strong hands picked me up and threw me on my spine across a low table.

I could not have fought him, even had I wanted to do so. He was out of his head with want, with the need for my flesh. He came between my thighs like a battering ram, and found his entry easy due to my own excitement.

All I could feel was that stabbing penetration.

I think I screamed, for that distension of the flesh drove at me with an ecstatic fervor I had never before experienced. I went on screaming even as my booted legs came up to wrap themselves about his lean hips.

I banged myself at him while he rammed himself into me. We were not lovers, we were fighting one with the other to find the relief we so desperately needed. Just so might Helmut first have taken his mother. I am positive he now thought himself to be in her embrace.

The woman had whipped him until he had lost all sense of what was right, what was wrong. She was a female, he was a male. It was all he knew, all he understood. In his ecstatic pain, he was not a reasoning person, but a brute.

As a brute, he took me. As an animal, I accepted him, without thought, with only my emptiness aching to be filled. And he filled me for what seemed an eternity of orgasmic delight.

Just Helmut, just me. For a long, long time.

When he was shuddering for the last time, when his arms had spasmed around me and while he was starting his collapse upon my corseted body, he began to sob unrestrainedly.

Reality had come back to Helmut Fleischel.

His arms still held my body but his lips whispered pleas for forgiveness. I soothed him, I told him I had wanted him to do exactly what he had done. If there was any guilt attached to this act of sex between us, it was shared by both of us.

Apparently, this was what his mother had done.

He did not seem surprised at my words, he smiled through his tears and kissed my throat. His lips were a little apart, they burned my flesh with his kiss. And then Helmut started sliding his mouth downward.

His mouth touched my breasts, kissed them gently, not with passion but in some strange form of body worship. His body slipped further and further away as he lowered himself to his knees on the floor. His hands caught hold of my thighs and drew me forward to the very edge of the table.

He began to kiss me, as if to repay me for the mercy I had shown him. I squirmed and squealed, for Helmut was an expert at what he was doing. He paid homage to my flesh on his knees and with his lips and tongue. He gave me my reward, again and again.

Even in my delirium of pleasure, I understood that I had won myself a slave to order about, to whip or caress as pleased me. Helmut Fleischel would not stay on in Hamburg. He would see that I reached Innsbruck, just as soon as I wanted.

Helmut would do whatever I commanded.

CHAPTER NINE

The lobby of the plush Maria Theresa Hotel in Innsbruck was crawling with people as I made my way across one of its thick carpets. I was more than halfway across the lobby before I felt the sensation of hard eyes focussing on me.

I told myself they were H.A.T.E. eyes.

I also told myself not to panic. Just a moment before, I had been slightly miffed that I had not attracted even a sideways glance. I was worth a lot more than that, to male eyes. I wore a turtleneck sweater of heavy white wool under which my breasts bounced freely, I had on a palomino calf-skin mini-skirt which displayed my legs in white nylon tights. I had honestly expected a few whistles.

But this reaction was too hot for comfort.

Well, I really shouldn't have expected anything less. H.A.T.E. knew that Wolfgang von Horstmann came to meet his contact in Innsbruck. H.A.T.E. also knew that I

was determined to meet that contact and get the microfilm. *Ergo*, H.A.T.E. had men here and there in various hotels to pick up my trail.

I let my buttocks joggle a little more loosely under the nylon tights. Helmut was close behind me, staring at my behind when he was supposed to have been looking around him, as I was, for enemy agents. He got the message from my semaphoring checks. He lifted his eyeballs off my buttocks and put them where they could do us both the most good.

As we paused at the glass doors that led out onto the street patio, I breathed, "Recognize anybody? Any of the H.A.T.E. agents who came to the Pleasure Dome? You've seen a number of them setting up their play back in Hamburg. You said so yourself."

"Nobody I know," he announced miserably.

I patted his forearm. "Well, no matter. Let them follow us, if they want. We'll find a way to shake 'em."

We were bound for the ski slopes, Helmut very neat in maroon and white sweater and white ski pants. Helmut had assured me he was an excellent skier. I was no Gretchen Fraser but I could do a Christiana without falling on my face.

Besides, I was wearing my dice earrings and my gun-bracelet. My earrings were actually tiny hand grenades, and I had reloaded the gun-bracelet to maximum capacity. I expected trouble. I had the feeling I wasn't going to be disappointed.

Helmut had made all the arrangements. We were to pick up our skis, properly waxed and ready, at the sports shop beyond the esplanade. We would take the bus to the ski slopes and be swept upward over the Birgitzkopf to the little cabin at its crown, via the cable lift. There we might pause for a brandy or plunge directly into the action.

I was glad I was wearing my Irish fisherman sweater as the wind nipped at us, walking toward the tow buckets. The wind blew puffs of snow from the surrounding slopes so that we saw them as through a white fog. This same *föhn* stung my nose and lips. I tugged down my woolen mask so that all my face was covered except for the eyes. I slipped my goggles down over them.

Helmut muttered, "The wind is good thing, *leibchen*. It

will perhaps hide us from any pursuit if it keeps on blowing this way."

"It will freeze my ass off as well."

He laughed, "I will kiss heat into it, my darling."

Actually, I wasn't all that cold. The calfskin skirt was warm, and my velour-surfaced nylon tights held in my body warmth. I could feel good health surging through my veins. It was good to be alive and with an important date to keep.

Even with H.A.T.E. tailing me.

A male attendant handed me a pair of Stein Eriksen skis and twin poles. Helmut selected the longer, man-size runners.

Then I was on a platform, stepping into a bucket seat hung from a steel arm fastened to a taut metal cable by a steel pulley. Helmut dropped into the other seat and the liftbuckets kept on sliding.

As our buckets mounted at a steeper angle, my blonde Teuton turned casually to watch the next few couples mount behind us. After a time he felt reassured, and turned to me.

"Now I can speak freely, with no one to hear." Our bucket seats were roughly a hundred yards apart, I noticed. Nobody in the seats before or behind us could hear our voices at such a distance.

"Herr von Horstmann always kept his appointments with his contact, the ski instructor, at a small anticline—a rock jut of grey granite—somewhat off the beaten path. Only the most excellent skiers ever roam so far from the beaten trails.

"Normally, it would be very safe to meet there. You can understand. Two prime skiers chancing to run their tracks close by, pausing for a cigarette and an exchange of pleasantries. If something more than words should pass between them—such as a microfilm, for instance—there would be nobody to see."

"But now?" I prompted.

He shrugged. "Now, I do not know. H.A.T.E. will have agents watching us with field glasses and passing the word on to other H.A.T.E. agents who will seek to intercept us."

"But not until we get the microfilm from Otto Karpf?"

"Not until then, no. They will want to get us all. You, because you are a L.U.S.T. agent, Otto because he is the

contact man and may betray other agents under torture. Me, because they will expect me to name people in von Horstmann's organization they do not know."

His voice was very gloomy. "It will be a fine bag for H.A.T.E. They will get not only us but the microfilm, as well."

My elbow plunked him in the ribs. "Hey, come on. Cheer up. You sound like chief mourner at a funeral."

He tried to brighten, but his face was sombre.

I stared around me at the distant spruce trees and the gently rounded slopes which were white with snow. The wind was scented by pine and made a sweetness in the nostrils that was as heady as wine. It was good to be alive on such a day, with the sun warm on the body.

It was not a good day to die. I told myself to be very careful, very alert. Up this high, the other skiers looked like ants on the slopes. Any number of those skiers could be H.A.T.E. agents waiting to kill me.

There was a broad white leather belt about my slim middle to keep my skirt up. I had a hidden compartment or two or three on its reverse side. In those compartments I carried various and sundry items like a hypodermic syringe, ampules of pentothal sodium, the truth drug, and extra ammunition for my gun-bracelet.

The lift was almost at the top.

I shifted position, getting ready to step out onto the landing platform. As I did so, I caught the flash of sunlight on metal far away and at the edge of a stand of tall, dark evergreens. My female intuition rose up and pawed the air.

The sunlight might be shining off a pair of snow-goggles, or off the tip of a ski pole. I did not think so, however.

I hooked Helmut about the neck and yanked his head down. I made as if I were kissing him for good luck.

A shrillness whined in the air, very close.

It was a bullet. I have heard too many of them fired at me—and missing—to be mistaken about it.

A moment later we heard the flat report of the rifle, since sound does not travel as fast as a speeding bullet. I felt Helmut stiffen under my arm.

"Sharpshooter in the woods," I breathed.

"I heard. You have good reflexes."

It was why I am still alive today. Maybe I am just nosey, maybe I like to see everything that goes on around me, but my eyes are never still. I credit my innate nosiness with having saved my skin a score of times. It had also just saved Helmut Fleischel too, I think.

"I was wrong," he said in a hollow voice. "H.A.T.E. does not want to capture me. They want me dead."

I nodded. "To prevent you from taking me to find von Horstmann's contact. They would have liked to take you alive, Helmut—with the idea of discovering where and when the rendezvous was to have been made. But since they could not do that. . . ."

I let my voice trail off.

He muttered, "Perhaps the raid on the Pleasure Dome was to accomplish that, as well as an attack by the H.A.T.E. rebels against its regulars."

"It's very possible," I admitted.

He was sweating and his eyes went again to the stand of evergreens from which the rifle had been fired.

But there were no more shots.

Helmut helped me onto the landing platform that looked out across the white vista of the Birgitzkopfl. I had no eyes for its beauty at the moment. I was telling myself this was It, this was the Big One coming up.

My job was to meet Otto Karpf and get the microfilm. Then I had to keep myself alive until I could put that film into David Anderjanian's big hands.

Helmut led me to a long wooden bench. While I sat, he busied himself with my Haderer ski boots, fitting them into the aluminum bindings of my Stein Eriksen skis. These bindings are very important to a skier. With bindings properly fitted, you may save yourself a broken leg or worse.

His palm patted my ankle, indicating he was done.

As he bent to his own bindings, I stood guard over him, to all intents and purposes admiring the beauty of the countryside. This is a wild, barren world, here in the Austrian Alps. Except for the skiers, it would be a winter wasteland. It was breathtakingly lovely, all white snow and dark trees with here and there a rock outcropping. At any other time I would have stood here, entranced.

Helmut said as he straightened, "We will play a game of follow the leader. I will start it off."

He was worried, and I could scarcely blame him. If I should prove to be a tyro on skis—a "snow bunny" as they name them, stateside—he would have his work cut for him. I had the feeling he might even back out on the project, right now.

There is no one more helpless against attack than a beginner strapped onto skis. Especially a girl beginner. Helmut was probably wondering how he would be able to protect me and get me safely out of H.A.T.E.'s clutches if I were unable to ski.

I giggled. Helmut was in for a surprise.

My elbow sent him back a step so that I could go off the platform ahead of him. I heard him gasp in surprise, then chuckle.

My skis sank onto new powder snow that made for excellent skiing. In went my Eriksens, in went my poles. I began my duck walk toward the slope. I heard the whisper of skis as my blonde Teuton followed in my tracks.

I guess he figured he was in for fun time. A crazy Amerikaner girl—pah! What could she do on skis that he could not? Helmut still looked on me as his super-woman, of course. But I was an American, and Americans are not numbered among the world's greatest skiers, except for a very few.

Europeans live much of their lives on skis. In some countries they start at four years of age. The kids take their skis to school with them. I knew Helmut Fleischel was an expert.

I had no hope of putting him to shame. All I wanted to do was convince him that he did not have to worry about me, on these slopes.

I started casually enough on a downhill run. I had been taught the Allais method, in which the body-turn activates the skis. I eased into an open Christiana and angled my tracks toward a long, smooth incline. The wind on my face, the slither of the skis on the hardpacked snow, the aliveness of my body, made me yelp in delight.

"*Gut, gut,*" I heard him muttering behind me.

My skis were excellent. They performed exactly as I wanted. I schussed a hill ahead, dug my poles in, then slid over the crown in a simulated slalom, using a couple of trees as markers.

I straightened out for a long downhill run.

After a while, Helmut came up beside me.

His eyes were admiring behind his goggles where the sun caught them. Behind his woolen mask I was sure his lips were smiling.

"You are good," he admitted. "I will not have to worry about taking care of you. Now let me take the lead."

Our game of follow the leader was over.

From now on, it was serious work.

Helmut ran on before me, body bent a little forward, pushing at the snow with a pole now and then. I noted that his traverse was carrying him farther and farther from the regular ski areas, away from the line of trees and toward a vast expanse of snow and ice which might have been seen on frozen Jupiter.

We slid on and on.

An unbroken silence pressed against us with an almost tangible force. We ran alone in the world, just the two of us.

Once Helmut assayed a *gelandesprung*, in which the skier dies in his poles and leaps through the air. In the middle of his leap, Helmut looked back over his shoulder, seeing my somewhat awkward imitation of his birdlike grace. I completed my leap and kept my balance, drawing a muffled shout of approval.

Then I saw a big grey rock up ahead. I knew instinctively this was the rendezvous point with Otto Karpf. My heart started thudding wildly. Would the ski-meister show? Would he be here where he had come patiently, day after day, waiting for Herr von Horstmann to appear? I would know very soon.

Helmut ran at full speed for the rock. At the last moment he checked, scattering snow. I came up beside him in a modified *wedeln*.

"Is he here?" I asked, staring up at the rock.

"Not yet, we wait."

We waited, not speaking, just letting our breath puff out in white wisps. It was silent here, it was white nature. I felt like an interloper standing in a snowy garden of the gods. Five minutes, ten minutes.

Then we caught the whisper of skis on snow. A man swung into view from around the huge grey rock. He was

a young man, a German-Austrian. He wore comfortable clothes, a worn beige sweater and brown pants above his boots. A woolen ski-hood covered his face.

I searched my memory as he stepped closer, nodding.

"There was a young girl named Marie, who shussed along on one ski," I said softly. His expression of surprise was ludicrous. I know he expected to meet Herr von Horstmann, not Helmut Fleischel and an Amerikaner female. "She sought to slalom but fell on her bum—and what a cold heinie has she."

Otto Karpf drew a deep breath.

"Herr von Horstmann?" he asked softly.

"He is dead," Helmut told him, and explained how and why the old man had been killed. The ski-master listened impassively, his face showing absolutely no expression.

When Helmut was done, I added quickly, "I am here to get the microfilm, the real film. Certain H.A.T.E. agents gave Eric Downes' contact a false one but—hoping to discredit the H.A.T.E. high command, other H.A.T.E. agents prevented him from delivering it by killing him. Fortunately or unfortunately—I can't decide which—they failed to get their hands on the false film."

The ski teacher nodded. "It is a game of power politics they play, those H.A.T.E. men. There are good pickings at the top of the echelon, in an organization like H.A.T.E. Men will risk much to get their hands on such money."

He reached into his ski trousers, brought out a metal cylinder that was about an inch long, less than one-thirty-second of an inch in diameter. Otto Karpf smiled grimly at my expression.

"It is not a long formula. It can be contained on very little microfilm. Your friend Eric Downes could have hidden something as tiny as this almost anywhere."

He dropped it into my palm. I sucked in my belly and slipped the tube into a compartment on the inside of my white leather belt.

"What is it, this formula?" I asked Otto. "What is it supposed to do?"

He frowned slightly. "You know of E.S.P.? Extra-sensory perception? The Russians take such matters very seriously, you know. They have been experimenting a long time with telepathy and other assorted talents."

I had read Charles Fort and knew about the Duke experiments of Dr. Joseph B. Rhine. Just as modern nations used every weapon they could get their hands on in the undeclared cold war which had raged since the end of World War II, so they now turned to the wild talents of their citizens. No scientist can explain the abilities of an Edgar Cayce or a Geraldine Cummins or a Dr. W.H.C. Tenhaeff. Yet they exist.

To channel these eerie abilities, to divert them into a recognized arm of the secret service, was a goal which might pay undreamed-of dividends. Telepathy tests have been conducted in the United States for more than a quarter of a century. Distance has no effect on this mind communication. Imagine then, a master telepathist seated in the Kremlin, mentally tuned in to thousands of Red spies, also master telepathists. Knowledge is flashed instantaneously from Washington or London or Paris to Moscow, without any known method of code-breaking or interference.

The idea was frightening.

Brain waves are a form of electricity, as any electrogram will prove. Like radio or television waves, they can travel almost everywhere. If one brain can send out these waves, certainly other brains can be receptive to them. It is that simple.

Consider a case in point. The rocket discoveries of Robert H. Goddard were ignored in the United States, yet were taken up by German scientists. The world knows the story of how rocket buzz-bombs were used against London, and how rockets are now fired into orbit or out into space to Mars, Venus and the Moon. The discoveries in the parapsychologic field remain untapped in my own country, yet the Russians are proceeding by leaps and bounds to study, analyse and employ these forms of extra-sensory perception.

One of these E.S.P. abilities is precognition, the talent to foresee events before they happen. In a Kremlin room beside the master telepathist may sit a precognitive genius, who can put a hand on a world globe and tell what events will soon take place there. A man in Holland can do such a thing, today. Why not in Russia? Or Red China?

It is not something out of a science-fiction novel, nor yet a fantasy. Scientists believe this may be a sixth or seventh or eighth sense which some chosen people possess. Univer-

sities and institutes are making such people the basis of fulltime study.

Otto Karpf said, "There is a drug which can enlarge these paranormal powers. The microfilm contains the formula for that drug. In a time of emergency, a master telepathist or a paragnost might take such a drug, enabling him to do even greater wonders by freeing his mind almost completely."

He shrugged. "It is something the hard-headed realist will deny, eh? But the police of many countries turn today to these psychic detectives—with results that will astound your realist. Their predictions come true. Their accusations prove out."

"Another psychedelic drug," I muttered half scornfully. "L.S.D. or D-lysergic acid diethylamide. Mescaline. Psilocybin. There are a dozen of them."

"Not one like this," the ski master muttered. "This is a new one, tested, approved by scientist-parapsychologists. It works."

"I'll pass it on," I told him.

The whine was a scream in the air as a bullet chipped the grey rock inches from my ear. Otto Karpf growled, "They have found us!" He was away on his skis like a grey phantom, dipping, whipping through the hard snow, crouched low.

Helmut and I were likewise bent above our Eriksens. I threw a glance after Otto Karpf. He was a ghost gliding into a breath-taking *langlaufing*, racing faster and faster. Nobody but an Olympic champion stood a chance at overtaking him on these snowy slopes.

"He is safe," Helmut growled, as if catching my thought. "His woolen mask hid his identity. He will burn his clothes against later recognition. He will be out of sight in a few moments."

But we would not be out of sight. I could see four men coming for us like the wind. Each of them held rifles—high-powered .30-.30 jobs, with which each man was a crack shot, no doubt—as they slid after us on their aluminum skis.

Helmut was moving ahead of me. He said, "They will not follow me, they know me already. They will come for you."

There was agony on his face. I said, "Go on, then. Get

away while you can. I have means of protecting myself."

He shook his head stubbornly. I snapped, "Don't be a fool! I tell you I'm not in any danger. They will want me alive, don't you understand?"

My blonde Teuton looked hopeful. "You believe this?"

No, I did not believe it. The H.A.T.E. killers would shoot me down without mercy and take the psychedelic drug formula away from me. But I did not tell Helmut Fleischel that. He had been afraid I would hamper him. Actually, he was hampering me.

Up ahead of us was a great, towering conifer. On one side the slope fell away at a steep angle, but one which an expert skier like the German would have no difficulty traversing. On the right hand side of the big silver fir the ground ran flat for a hundred yards before it began to curve downward where a huge block of rock thrust upward from the snow.

"Take the left side at the fir tree," I ordered.

"Will you be all right?"

"Do as I say! Instantly!"

The maschistic element in Helmut Fleischel would not let him disobey. He flashed away from me as I entered the shadow of the tree, disappeared down the steep incline, almost flying on his skis. I drove in my poles and raced toward the big rock.

I heard shouts of delight from my four pursuers. They figured I was in the bag. They did not even bother shooting. They assumed I would fall easy prey to four strong men, because my calfskin skirt and Irish wool sweater showed them I was only a woman, after all. Instead of killing me, H.A.T.E. would take me prisoner to torture all my knowledge out of me.

I whipped past the rock and braked.

The four men could not see me. I was below the hill crown as I slid into the snowplow. At the same instant I yanked at my gun-bracelet. With the bracelet in a hand I moved upward toward the rock.

I peeped past an edge of the grey granite. The four H.A.T.E. men were between the big fir tree and me. I aimed the gun-bracelet. I fired.

A .25 bullet hit one man in the throat. A mate took a second in his left eye. The two bodies were flopping, skis

waving crazily as they somersaulted through snow and air to a sudden stop. I spared them no attention, I was too busy concentrating on the remaining two men.

They had seen what had happened. Their rifles drove for their shoulders, they sighted at me. I ducked down behind grey granite as bullets slammed into the rock. In a moment they would be flashing past the edge of the rock and turning those big Mauser rifles at my shrinking flesh.

I yanked at a dice earring.

I pressed one of the dots. It clicked.

My hand flung it through the air. The tiny die hit the first man as he swept into a snowplow stop. The die exploded.

Chunks of bloody flesh flew everywhere. I gagged, leaning my spine against the grey granite boulder as the snow was streaked red. I heard a voice scream in agony. And my flesh crawled. There had not been enough left of the H.A.T.E. agent to utter so much as a whimper. Death had been instantaneous.

Then I remembered the fourth man, his companion.

I bellied down on the snow, kicking off my ski bindings. I held a second earring in my left hand and my gun-bracelet in my right. I snaked forward on the cold snow.

The last man was lying on his back, staring upward at the sky. I saw his sweater move. Good. He was not yet dead. I crawled forward on my elbows and knees.

When I was beside him, I saw that my die-bomb had not expended all its fury against the first skier. This man's legs had been blown away. There was nothing of him left below the middle of his thighs.

I fumbled in my belt compartment. I brought out the hypodermic needle and inserted an ampule of pentothal sodium. I caught his arm. I slipped in the needle. His eyelids quivered.

"Vas iss?" he breathed.

"A friend. I want to know why you want the Amerikaner woman. If it is worth my while I will try to capture her for you."

He was too far gone to know truth from lie. He whimpered so faintly I had to put my ear directly above his lips. "Near the Altstadt. Number forty-one. The house with the oriel windows with leaded panes. Say Ludwig sent

you. They may take care of my wife. They will pay—good money for the Amerikaner. She knows much. She has something we would like to have.”

“Are you sure? Are there many men there?”

He was silent a moment. I think what was left of him knew suspicion at that moment but the truth drug was working in his viens.

“*Nein*. Not many. Three—four, including Herr Vogel. It is Herr Vogel who will pay you the money—ten thousand dollars—three thousand pounds—for her and what she carries.”

He did not know me. Perhaps he was already in his death throes and he truly believed me a fellow H.A.T.E. agent. Or perhaps it was the drug. I will never know. But he talked freely.

“Tell Herr Vogel the Amerikaner bitch killed Carl, Wilhelm, Frederick and me. He will make her die a long time. Carl and Wilhelm and Frederick and I will sleep better, knowing that.”

I shivered.

“Is there any password?”

“*Nein*—no password.”

“Where is the false film?”

“We do not know. We could not find it.”

Good enough. So far, Willi Vogel and I were even, with me out a little ahead in the stretch. All I had to do now was collect Helmut and shake the snows of Innsbruck from our shoes.

I waited until the man died.

I didn't want anybody finding him alive, that was for sure. I had killed four men on these ski slopes and I wanted no police investigation. L.U.S.T. had no in with the Austrian authorities.

I put my die bomb back inside my belt, slipped my gun-bracelet on my wrist, and fitted my Haderer boots back into my skis. Then I picked up my trail where it had left off and slipped swiftly down the slopes toward the bottom.

It took me an hour and a half to get back to my room at the hotel. I expected to find Helmut waiting for me. He was not there. I phoned the desk, but the clerk could tell me nothing.

Three hours later, Helmut still had not shown. I got worried. I could have taken a plane back to London from the Munich airport, but I could not abandon my blond Teuton to his fate. I had the sneaky feeling that somehow, H.A.T.E. had crossed his ski tracks.

It was close to seven o'clock when I took the staircase down to the main lobby and slipped through that to the dark street. I was wearing a courduroy jump suit and white leather knee-boots, with a white trench coat over it. A floppy hat hid my face in its shadow.

A Colt .25 automatic weighed down a trench coat pocket.

The night was crisp, cold. Overhead the sky was flecked with pinpoints of light and the moon was at the quarter. I walked swiftly through the little streets, hunting the Altstadt. After that, it was a matter of finding the house with the oriel window.

Innsbruck swings, in a genteel sort of way. The Altstadt, with its narrow streets and ancient houses, retains a medieval flavor even amid the hustle of skiers on their way to dates at the Landler. The alleyways are clean, they are pathways into romance or intrigue. I listened to my footfalls that seemed to synchronize their beat with those of my heart.

I had promised Wolfgang von Horstmann I would keep his Helmut safe from harm. I was on my way to keep that promise, my hand deep in the pocket of my trench coat, my fingers wrapped about the butt of my Colt automatic.

I would shoot first, ask questions later.

The oriel window with its leaded panes caught my eye a block away. It jutted out from the stone walls like a blister on a thumb. Anyone within that alcove would have a good view of the street, both ways. I tried to make myself inconspicuous in the street shadows.

I walked past the house, studying it. There was a street level entrance; it would be difficult indeed to get in there, without detection. The house itself, which had been built in all probability by a rich merchant in the days when the Hanseatic League was in its greatest glory during the fourteenth century, was big, wide and roomy. It was fronted by a very narrow sidewalk, and a stone path ran up along its north side.

I swung back on the other side of the street. The path looked like my only hope. As I came level with it, I darted onto its flagstones, running silently on my toes. No one had seen me, at least I hoped no one had. It was the dinner hour, there were not many people on the street.

There was a back door. I tried its latch. The latch lifted but the door held tight. It was dark here, the shadows were very black. I used my fingers along the edge of the door—ahhh. A lock of the Yale and Towne variety. I wondered if H.A.T.E. had put that lock where it was.

My fingers fumbled in a pocket of my jump suit. I brought out my fountain pen, unscrewed top and bottom to reveal the thin length of blue steel. I slipped it into the lock and worked it.

The lock held tight.

I put my fountain pen back in my pocket and chose a length of plastic. There was a space between door and lintel. This was an ancient house; in settling and warping here and there, gaps had formed. My hope was that the bolt would not be wedged too tightly in the plate fitted into the lintel.

It was not a tight fit. I used the plastic gently. Just one-sixteenth of the bolt held the door. That fraction of an inch gave easily. The door swung inward.

An electric light burned in the kitchen. A brighter light showed to one side of the narrow hallway that ran toward the front of the building, from a doorway inset into the hallway wall. I tiptoed toward it.

I heard a voice speaking.

"It is useless to be a hero, mein herr. My men are expert with knife and rope, whip or wedge. Hein? You will please to tell me where this fraulein is staying, in what hotel and what room. You understand? The man who might have told me is dead."

"Go—to—hell."

Brave Helmut! Maybe my session with him in the cellar of Wolfgang von Horstmann's house had paid me extra dividends. Helmut Fleischel might betray the lady from L.U.S.T. He would never rat on his—mother. In Helmut's inner mind, I was his blonde mother.

I decided not to give him a chance to make the decision.

I kicked off my boots. In my bare feet I moved toward the lighted doorway.

I was staring into a big cellar, from which the musty smell of moulding earth and damp walls swept over me like the miasma from a graveyard. My fingers tightened on the Colt's butt. Graveyards should contain dead bodies. I lifted the gun, I lay down on the hallway floor, I slid head-first down the steps.

Had I gone down those stairs in the conventional manner, I would have been a dead girl. By the time I could have seen what was in the cellar, a bullet would have finished me off. Because as I slid downward head first, my eyes stared into the face of a H.A.T.E. man, mouth open in dumb surprise.

He could have yelled the alarm if he had seen my ankles first. As it was, my gunhand was level with his baby blues. My trigger finger squeezed.

My head damn near blew off with the sound of the shot. An automatic will not take a silencer. My ears began ringing like Big Ben on the dot of twelve. I didn't bother to shake my head to clear it. Three men were standing around a table where Helmut Fleischel lay strapped down, stark naked. One of the men had a thin knife in his hand. I wondered where H.A.T.E. had laid hands on that knife. It was of Matabele workmanship. It had been used, I learned later, by skinners for the king of that African empire, Lo Bengula, about eighty years ago.

Those skinners had flayed living men of their outer coverings, when men—or women too, for that matter—offended the great Lo Ben in some manner. Flaying had gone out of style as a means of torture, I guess, now that Lo Bengula had been dead these many years.

But the H.A.T.E. boys were ready to revive it as an indoor sport until I stuck my nose into their business. Where my nose led me, I sent a few bullets.

The man with the knife I dropped first with a .25 slug neatly placed at the base of his neck. He fell straight down, dead before his knees began to buckle. I slid the Colt a fraction of an inch. The trigger sent another bullet on its way. A red blotch erupted in the middle of a forehead.

There was one man left.

He had slipped back into the shadows at my first shot. Now when I looked for him, I could not see him. I heard a door slam, somewhere in the cellar. Maybe there was another way in or out of the cellar besides this staircase I was laying on, head down. My head was banging away so that I had to wait until it cleared before I could hear anything.

"Helmut," I said after a moment, "is there a doorway to the cellar? Beside this hall door?"

"Ja, I think so. I heard a man come in another way, a little while before you got here."

I swung around and ran down the stairs. I freed Helmut of the leather straps, I helped him off the table.

"Who was the man who got away, Helmut?"

"Willi Vogel. He had seven men with him in Innsbruck. Did you kill them all?"

"All, Helmut. But never mind that now. I've got to get you out of here. Come on, walk a little. That's it. One foot after the other. Now where are your clothes?"

"Upstairs."

"Then we'll go and get you dressed."

My automatic led the way, held out in front of me. I am glad nobody came barging into this house just then. I would have fired at the sight of a black cat. My nerves were a little jumpy.

It took Helmut less than three minutes to get his clothes on. I know. I timed him. We ran down the stairs to the ground floor with the Colt still showing us the way.

Leaving by the front door was a little too risky. Willi Vogel might be out there in the street shadows, waiting his chance to strike back. I didn't feel a bit like getting shot at, so we chose the rear door. I lay flat on my pretty belly and nudged the door open with the Colt barrel.

The backyard was empty.

My elbows inched me forward onto the tiny porch. There was no one on the flagstoned path, either. We got to our feet and moved down the path toward the street. We waited ten minutes before we moved onto the sidewalk. During that time we scanned every inch of street. Willi Vogel would have to be invisible to escape our detection.

Willi Vogel was not invisible. He was not there.

He did not know where we were staying, here in Innsbruck. Otherwise he would not have sought to gain that information from Helmut when he was strapped down on the flaying table.

All we had to do was make sure we were not followed. I do believe that night not even a mouse could have trailed us, unseen.

CHAPTER TEN

Helmut sagged against the door of my hotel room as it closed behind him. There was a film of sweat on his forehead and a muscle spasm caused the skin of his jaw to quiver. His blue eyes were bright with an emotion I could not identify as I dropped down into an easy chair.

"Well, we got it," I murmured in exhaustion. "The microfilm is safe, Willi Vogel is on the lam. We broke the back of his little rebel army."

"You did it," Helmut said slowly. "I did nothing—except that I did not betray you."

"I'm grateful for that, really I am. Especially since Willi got away. If he'd followed us here, there's no telling what he might or might not do."

I let a little shiver run down my spine.

Helmut came across the room and stood before me. "I must admit I was not thinking of you, Miss Drum, when I told Vogel I did not know where you were." His hand

moved across his eyes, rubbing his flesh as if to ward off a headache. "I—I was very confused at the time. I kept thinking it was my mother I was saving by not talking."

"I know, Helmut," I smiled. "But I'm still grateful."

"You know? I don't understand."

"You've seen me as your dead mother ever since we spent those few hours in Herr von Horstmann's cellar. It's how you think of me." I sat up straighter. I was getting an idea. "But now you know the truth. You know I'm not your mother. When did it happen? Think, Helmut."

He stared down at me, flushed. His blue eyes were very bright. I'm not sure what you're getting at. All of a sudden, I knew."

"When you were on the torture table?"

He frowned thoughtfully, then shook his head. "Yes. No. After that, I think. You see, I was tensed up to suffer any pain—anything they did to me I would bear if it would mean helping my mother. Stupid of me. My mother's been dead for years."

"Not in your mind, Helmut," I said gently.

His cheeks reddened even more. "What must you think of me? I am a freak, like someone you read about in those medical volumes under case histories."

"Hell, nobody's perfect. We all have our phobias."

"Not you," he smiled.

"Even me," I nodded.

Helmut kicked a hassock closer with his ski boot. He sat down, folded his arms on his knees. "Tell me," he urged. "Please? I think I would find it most helpful."

But I shook my head. I had a different angle of attack planned. "Another time, some other place. Right now I want to concentrate on you. Helmut, tell me the truth. Can you enjoy a woman without first being whipped?"

"No. Always I have to be whipped."

"And you fantasy your mother as the whipper?"

"Yes, that is so."

I drew a deep breath. This was the moment when I would either make or break my big blonde Teuton. His eyes were touching my corduroy jump suit, that showed off the shapes of my breasts and the tiny bulge of belly, with more than passing interest. It was a good sign, I thought.

"Don't think you paid her back tonight for all the pleasure she gave you?" I asked softly.

He looked startled. His eyes came up from the vee where my thighs met as the jump suit made a little fold, to stare at me. There was curiosity in his look. I smiled at him brightly.

"You've always felt guilt associations where your mother was concerned, Helmut. That is why you had to be whipped first, before you could enjoy sex."

Me, girl psychiatrist.

I honestly did not know whether I was putting my finger on the pulse of the trouble. I hoped so. I like to help people. I remembered the way I had helped Martin Sloane on my first L.U.S.T. assignment. I would dearly love to help Helmut Fleischel. After all, he had helped me get the micro-film.

Besides, Abraham Lincoln had freed the slaves.

I watched his face turn white, then come back to its normal suntan color. He was thinking furiously, seated on the hassock. At last he nodded his head.

"What you say may be so. Yes, it could be. I am not a stupid man, you know. I know you read a lot. Well, I read very much, myself. I have made a study of myself, but everything I learned was no help." His hands spread wide. "I could explain the whys and wherefores of my conduct. I simply could not overcome them."

"Because you never had the chance to expiate your guilt fully. Well, you expiated it tonight, on that torture table."

"But there was no torture. It never began."

"It was there, ready to begin. You had already made up your mind to suffer for the mother you felt guilty about."

"Ja, that is true."

"And had the torture been applied had those flaying knives peeled the skin from your body if I hadn't shown up—would you have told where Willi Vogel might find your 'mother'?"

"Never!" he growled. "No matter what they did."

"Well, then?" I laughed, spreading my hands.

Helmut drew air into his lungs. There was sudden hope on his face. "You think I am maybe cured? That I will not need the whip to want a woman? To enjoy her?"

I told myself I was an idiot to linger here in this hotel room when I should be on my way to the Munich airport, with that microfilm tucked away safely for delivery to David Anderjanian. Yet I am no ingrate. I would never have laid hands on the microfilm were it not for Helmut Fleischel.

If I could leave him a normal man, with the desires of a normal man for a woman, without the need for a whipping, I would feel a lot better about things. It would sort of round the corners off.

"Why don't we find out?" I murmured.

He leaned forward. I met his lips with my mouth and we kissed, gently and without desire for a little time. His lips were soft, they quivered against me, and I sensed the faint stirrings in his flesh. His hand touched my hair, slid down to my throat, stroked me.

"Take off your clothes. Please, Eve."

"You don't want to do it?"

"No. Suddenly I want to sit back and — and just watch. The way any—any normal man might want to see his girl getting ready to go to bed with him."

This was a good sign, I thought. Ordinarily, he would be wanting to unhook me, push down garments, abase himself like a menial. Now he was sitting back on the hassock, smiling at me. I slipped my arms free of the trench coat, making my breasts bounce around inside the jump suit.

I was wearing no brassiere. My girl-girl attributes shook loosely but firmly, back and forth, up and down. Jiggling. I made them jiggle even more by doing a mild shimmy while I wrestled out of the trench coat sleeves.

Helmut laughed softly, proudly. "You see?" he asked.

I saw, when he stood up before me. There was a pronounced arousal of his male equipment. He grinned, "You didn't slap me, you didn't have to beat me. Eve, do you think . . .?"

His voice trailed off. I said soberly, reaching behind me to the snaps of the jump suit, "You've been excited without being whipped, before. Remember the movie we saw? And when you bathed me in Herr von Horstmann's bathtub?"

"Ah, but at the *cinema bleu* I watched a young man pleasure a woman as if he were her slave. And in the tub—

well, what was I going to do but act the slave role by bathing you?"

I got my jump suit down my arms, I drew off the sleeves. I let it sag away from my hardening breasts. Helmut gulped, staring, seeing the rigid brown nipples, the pallid rounded flesh quivering to the motion of my arms.

"You are the slave," he said suddenly. "You are my slave-woman. I have just purchased you in the slave market, as they used to do in Rome."

His eyes were hard, his face like marble. This was not the Helmut Fleischel I had known. This man was a stranger. I felt a chill ripple down my spine. Was I a better doctor than I knew? Could I have cured him of his problem so soon? I wished I knew more about psychiatry.

"That's the idea," I muttered weakly. "You're doing fine. Keep up the good work."

I got to my feet. The corduroy bodice was hanging below my navel, held at my hips only by its elasticity. Helmut lifted his palms, put them under my breasts. He shook my breasts very gently, bouncing them on his palms.

"My slave," he breathed. "My slave who must do everything I tell her. Is it not so?"

"Yes, Helmut," I nodded. "Man, do you ever like games?"

His hand made a little gesture. "Take the rest of the suit off. Then go get me a cigarette."

I bent down, I slipped the jump suit off. I had to kick my feet out of my boots to get free of it. Helmut just stood there, looking on. There was no tenderness in his face, only a grim hardness. I thought, I'm better than a faith healer. Maybe I'm in the wrong line.

He told me to put some shoes on. I did what he said. The high heeled shoes made my legs look more graceful as I walked naked across the room to pick up a pack of Old Golds. I saw myself in the mirror of the closet door. I looked like Sexy Mimi from Miami.

I walked back to him, I put a cigarette between his lips. I lighted it. He drew in smoke, let it out slowly.

"Now you undress me," he said softly.

I knew my way around a man. I had his tie undone and off, his shirt unbuttoned and was drawing it down his arms when he snapped. "Hurry it up, hurry it up!" I hurried.

I knelt to pull his trousers down, to draw off his shorts.

I gulped, seeing how much of a man he was. His fingers tangled in my golden locks as he urged my face closer.

"Uh-uh," I said.

His fingers twisted. I yelled. His fingers let go. Next thing I knew his palm was belting me across the side of the face. He put so much force into the blow, I went backwards to sprawl full length on the carpet.

"Helmut," I protested, a bit dazed. "What the hell's the idea?" My head was swimming around and around like on a merry-go-round.

"You have cured me," he told me.

He came naked to stand over me. He smiled down at me coldly. "Do I have to hit you again, my dear?"

"You know it, man," I breathed.

His smile seemed painted on. "I just want to prove I am the master, not the servant. If you will not do that, will you—just to show you are my slave—give me the micro-film you took from Otto Karpf this afternoon?"

I looked sideways at the jar of hand cream in which I had embedded the tiny capsule. I said, "Stop playing games, Helmut. Here, give me a hand up."

I lifted my fingers. Helmut caught my hand, yanked me up against him. His bare body against mine, his manhood nudged me in my most nudgable spot. His arms went around me.

He kissed like there was no tomorrow. His tongue was deep between my lips, his hands were fondling my soft buttocks. I started to moan.

"Do you think I am cured, teacher?" he paused to ask.

"Oh, yes, Helmut," I panted, snuggling up for more.

He lifted my girl-girl body with his hands in my shaven armpits. His lips touched my nipples, kissed them. He spent some time with my breasts before he lifted me even higher so that his mouth was on a level with my golden privacy.

"You see, my dear? I have no shame where you are concerned."

His lips and tongue were fires stoking steam in my boiler. I moaned. I tried to close my thighs but his head was in the way. Then he started walking, still working on me, until I was begging him to be good to me.

He let me sink down on the bed.

Helmut moved between my thighs. He teased me some

more, until I was just a mass of wanting woman. I could hear my voice begging him to get with it, that I had had my fill of teasing.

"First you must show you are my slavewoman," he panted. Helmut was hurting too, but he was more concerned with my slavery than his sex.

"All right, you bastard," I screamed, rolling out from under him. "I'll get the goddam microfilm."

I ran across the room, heedless of how much my breasts flopped or my backside joggled. I grabbed up the hand cream jar. I tossed it at Helmut where he sat on the edge of the bed.

"There it is. Now do what I want, damn you."

He caught the jar, he unscrewed the top. He looked in. Then he looked at me, advancing naked on him. "This is a new jar. It has not been disturbed."

"Oh, Helmut—what the hell difference does it make? I hoccussed the damn thing. Now come on, boy."

"How could you do that?" he wondered.

"I stuck the capsule down inside. I syphoned off some of the cream, I melted the top layer of cream back into place with my hair dryer."

Helmut laughed and shook his head. "You are a remarkable woman, Eve Drum. It would have fooled anyone, I think."

He put the jar on the night table, then he reached for me. I went willingly into his embrace. I was eager, I admit it. Just the sight of his own naked eagerness was enough to set my female instincts stirring. What he had done to me had melted me right down to my toes.

He slid me down on my back. My thighs went up and outward. Helmut slid forward. I moaned and clutched him. I rode him hungrily, back and forth and in a circle of jouncing hips. Helmut stayed right with me. He even added a few movements of his own.

I was shuddering into my third orgasm when I felt his fingers closing around my throat. I thought it was a caress, at first. Then his thumbs went into my windpipe, and I could not breathe.

I writhed. I twisted. I bounced us across the bed.

My hands clawed at his wrists, my eyes bulged up into

his hard face. If he did not relax his fingerhold, I was a dead dame.

"Helmut," I croaked as best I could. "Stop it."

He shook his head, grinning down at me.

"Foolish little Eve Drum. Foolish, foolish girl. I fooled you good, eh? You see—I am H.A.T.E., too."

My surprise must have been ludicrous because he began to laugh. His fingers eased up just enough so I could breathe. I felt strangled, but I was still alive.

"Von Horstmann was not the only man we duplicated, back at the Pleasure Dome. The real Helmut Fleischel is dead. Unfortunately, the real von Horstmann would not tell us where to meet his contact—or how—no matter how much he was tortured. We knew the rendezvous was at a special rock jut, for we had seen these meetings at a distance, through powerful field glasses. But we dared not keep the rendezvous, knowing the contact would demand some sort of password, as proof we came from the real von Horstmann.

"It was not until the rebel H.A.T.E. members raided the Pleasure Dome—and you and I fled—that I learned it was a limerick which served as a password between von Horstmann and Karpf. I did not know who the contact was until that moment, either."

He was quite proud of himself, was Helmut Fleischel. He had not even bothered to notify his bosses at H.A.T.E. headquarters what he was doing. The rebels knew him for a H.A.T.E. man. This was why one of them attempted to kill him on the ski lift. I guess they figured I knew where to meet Otto Karpf, that I did not need Helmut Fleischel any longer.

"You really f-fooled me," I whispered.

His hands had eased enough for me to talk, just a little. Every man likes to hear himself praised. My blonde Teuton was no exception.

So I added, "You were smarter than I was. I give you that. But you could have got rid of me at so many different opportunities. Why didn't you?"

"I needed you to get the microfilm, silly one. I tried to learn the limerick which von Horstmann was telling you. I could not. You knew it but I did not dare arouse your suspicions by asking you what it was.

"This is the first opportunity I've had since you got the microfilm to take it away from you."

"But Willi Vogel—was about to torture you!"

"Ah, yes. The rebel leader. Too bad you didn't get him with the others, my dear. He really would have used that knife on me. However, I assure you, I'd have told him all about this hotel and your room number, before a single one of those knives had so much as spilled a drop of my blood."

I tried to smile. My arms were flung wide, my right wrist was jammed into the edge of the night table. I felt utterly helpless.

"Then the bit about your mother was a lie?"

Helmut laughed. "My mother lives in Dresden in East Germany. And I have no sisters." His naked shoulders shrugged. "So you see, it was a pack of lies I fed you, which you swallowed like the fish the bait. It was very much fun while it lasted. Even the whipping I did not mind—too much. It was something I had to put up with, so I could get the microfilm.

"We honest H.A.T.E. agents do not want it to fall into Willi Vogel's hands. He would turn it over to the West just as you would do, were it not for me, Helmut Fleischel."

"If Willi were going to turn it over to the West anyhow, why was he fighting me?"

"Actually he wanted to take you alive as proof that he would make a better H.A.T.E. leader than our present one. Also, it was a matter of pride with him whether H.A.T.E. or L.U.S.T. turned over the capsule to Washington."

"I'm surprised you've let Willi Vogel live so long."

"He will not live much longer. You helped flush him out into the open. I am grateful for this but it is not enough to save your life. You have been fun in a way, Eve Drum—but the fun time is over."

My throat felt his thumbs tighten just as my right hand felt the hand cream jar on the night table. My right arm swung up, swiftly and savagely.

The base of the jar thudded into his temple. I saw his eyes roll back into his skull as his body went limp. His fingers loosed their grip. I slid out from under him as he flopped face down on the bed.

I reached for a pillow.

It would be easy to smother him, inert as he was. When he was dead I would leave him here while I got dressed and grabbed a taxi for the Munich airport. All I would take with me was the dress I was wearing, a coat and shoes.

Plus the jar of hand cream, natch.

I pressed his face into the pillow.

Hard.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

David Anderjanian knew more about antique pistols than I did, so he was the one who primed the Perkins 1806 flintlock, pouring in the powder, ramming home the wadding, checking the flint. He was intent on the task he had set himself, I was intent on what he was doing.

Neither of us heard any sound.

We were standing in the study of Eric Downes' manor house. Outside the sun was shining, the grass was a brilliant green, we were in Merry Old England. We had been granted permission to make a search for the microfilm by the Ministry of War, that was working hand in glove with L.U.S.T. on this case.

The precious microfilm was on its way to General Moffitt who commanded the L.U.S.T. organization, via an Air Force bomber. David was curious about the hiding place Eric Downes had selected, and about the manner of his death.

We both knew an antique pistol had killed him. What puzzled David was the manner of its firing. The hammer had not fallen, the iron had not scratched the flint to create a spark with which to ignite the powder. And nobody had been in the room with him.

David placed the pistol on the edge of the table. Its muzzle pointed at where a non-existent Eric Downes was bending before it, apparently to pick up something that had fallen. The stage was set.

"If we can go outside the house and fire the pistol, we can show how it was done," my case officer muttered.

He sat down on the chair where Eric had been sitting when he leaned down. David bent as Eric Downes might have bent. The muzzle pointed right at his skull.

"Is this the way he was positioned?" David asked.

I could not answer.

There was a dark shadow across David, which he could not see, since he was leaning forward and down, reaching for an imaginary object on the study carpet. My heart stopped.

Instinctively my foot went up.

I caught David and shoved with my high-heeled shoe. He toppled sideways, turning his face in surprise.

The pistol blasted.

A red flame ran from its muzzle past my nyloned calf. I felt the wind of its passage along my leg, even as I was whirling to stare at the figure crouched outside the study window.

I threw myself sideways just as faint light flashed from the weapon Willi Vogel carried. I did not need to see that odd weapon to realize it was some sort of heat beam developed by H.A.T.E. scientists. This heat beam had ignited the gunpowder in the flash pan of the Perkins pistol, firing it. I landed hard and bounced.

David was on his back, his Colt Special in a hand. He shot three times through the window but Willi Vogel was not staying to be aerated in any such way. He was off and running.

I flipped over, got to my feet and sprinted for the door. My gun-bracelet was in my hand. Willi Vogel had a club foot. He could not run too fast. Somehow, we would corner

him out there on the grounds and finish the job that had begun those weeks ago, in this same study.

David Anderjanian pounded along in my wake.

I found myself marveling at the sheer gall of this Willi Vogel. Unable to run fast, armed only with a heat beam, he was attempting to write finis to the careers of two L.U.S.T. agents all by himself—when more than a dozen H.A.T.E. agents had already fallen to my gun-bracelet.

Then I realized that the odds might not be so great, after all. The heat gun was silent. The beam it threw was invisible. All he had to do was aim it like a flashlight and that damn beam (I assumed it was an offshoot of the laser beam or an adaptation of that remarkable discovery) would burn a hole right through a person, at full power.

I veered away from the front door.

The clubfoot man was probably out there waiting for me to come tear-assing through the front entrance. He would really burn me up with that queer weapon he had. It was a cool spring day outside, but I could think of better ways to stay warm.

I slid into a room off the main hall and ran for the window. I peered out. I saw green grass and in the distance, about fifty yards away, a stand of trees. Those trees would make good cover for an assassin.

The gun-bracelet was steady in my right hand as my left pushed up a window. It was one thing to go up against someone with a revolver. I would see the flash of the gun and maybe hear the bullet miss. Facing that heat gun with the invisible beam of light, was quite another matter.

I had to find Willi Vogel before I slid one of my shapely nyloned legs over that windowstill. David was standing slightly behind me by this time. We didn't have to talk, he knew who it was that faced us.

"Go upstairs," I told him. "You'll have a better view from a bedroom window."

"Don't you go doing anything stupid," he growled, "like setting yourself up as a target to draw his fire."

"Unh-unh! I have a better idea. Wait."

I slipped my gun-bracelet on. I bent and caught the hem of my Ceil Chapman original and yanked the gorgeous thing upward. I shivered a little, I had on stockings, black nylon bikinis that were pretty scanty even for bikinis, and

a sort of half-bra. In between and up above those, just my girl flesh was showing.

David was standing by my side, staring.

"Don't you have anything to do?" I asked. "Like maybe going upstairs?"

"Better I should stay here," he grinned. "Two guns are better than one. Besides, if one of us gets hit, the other can get our man."

I explained what I had in mind. David grinned and gave my buttock nearest him an approving pat. Then he whirled and ran for the broom closet.

I had selected a couple of cushions from a sofa and a footstool, stuffing them inside my dress. The Ceil Chapman had cost me five hundred iron men. I told myself to put it down on my expense account, because I don't exactly float around in Ceil Chapman originals.

David brought a broomstick which I wedged into the back of the dress so that, with the cushions inside it, and a cushion to take the place of a head, it looked a little like a dummy.

David volunteered to work it. "I'll play puppeteer. You concentrate on your shooting."

From my window I could see the front door. I watched it open, I saw a shoulder of my dress move into view. Good show, David! He was revealing just enough to tempt Willi Vogel into taking a shot. Then the dummy disappeared.

For a moment I could not understand what David was up to. Then it dawned on me. If this were the real Eve Drum, she would do exactly that -offer a part of herself to tempt a shot, then duck for cover to draw a deep breath and make a dash for it.

My hand tightened on the gun-bracelet.

The door opened. The dummy came out.

Up this close, I felt a sense of failure. That thing wouldn't fool a child, let alone a smart cookie like Willi Vogel. Then I saw a burning spot and a wisp of smoke on the bodice of my beautiful ruined Ceil Chapman original.

I calculated the angle of fire.

My gun bracelet took aim on a patch of bushes to one side of the stand of trees. I began pumping bullets into the thicket as fast as I could. In echo came the deeper boom of his Colt Special.

Something moved, there in the bushes

Willi Vogel got to his knees, his body jerking spasmodically to the pain of his bullet wounds. David and I fired as one. Willi Vogel went over backwards. He never moved again.

I sagged against the window, catching my breath. Then I slid my leg out and followed David who was racing for the dead man. Willi Vogel had two slugs in his chest, another two in his forehead, and one in his shoulder.

David said, "One of your bullets must have gone in his shoulder as he lay prone. The pain drove him up onto his knees. As he was coming up, another of your shots drilled his chest. When we both fired, one bullet lodged in his forehead, a second in his chest."

"Some vacation," I mumbled, feeling sick.

David glanced at me sharply. "Go on inside the house. I'll phone the police, I'll handle everything. You just relax." He added with a grin, "Better go put your dress on too, honey. We don't want you arrested for impairing the morals of a police officer."

I stuck my tongue out at him, but my queasiness left me. I scampered for the house. I grabbed up my ruined dress and stepping inside the hall, slithered it over my shoulders and down my body.

I huddled myself up in a red leather lounge in the study and tried to think of something that would help me forget the way the man with the clubfoot had looked. All I could see was the—

No, no, Eve! Think of something else.

The microfilm.

Yes, Eric Downes had hidden the microfilm in this room. It was somewhere, it had to be. H.A.T.E. did not have it, neither did L.U.S.T.

I let my eyes roam the room. The microfilm was so tiny, it could be anywhere. I remembered that the metal cylinder which had held the real microfilm had been only one-thirty-second of an inch in diameter. So small, so small. It could be just about anywhere.

H.A.T.E. had searched this room. So had I.

It had to be somewhere other than the places I had looked. I settled back and crossed my ankles. My eyes would do the walking. I had little hope of discovering that false

film, but it would be a nice way to round off my so-called vacation.

My eyes walked across the carpet, up the desk and along its top. I shivered, seeing the antique pistol in almost the same position on the desk that it had been in after it had killed Eric Downes. There was no secret compartment in the desk, I was almost positive. Nor would there be hiding places in the chairs or the bookcases.

The microfilm had to be elsewhere.

But where hadn't I looked? Where had H.A.T.E. failed to search? There was a hiding spot here. There had to be!

My eyes touched the door that once opened into the dining room. The other side of the door was boarded up now. It was never used, it could not be opened.

My attention wandered from the door to the books. Could one of them be hollowed out just enough to fit a small capsule inside it? Too obvious. H.A.T.E. would have removed every last one of those books. My eyes slid sideways to the door. Something about the door bothered me.

Of course. The hinges!

They were big and black and bold, those old-fashioned hinges. Nobody would ever open that door again. They were not needed. The hinges were excess baggage.

"David," I yelled. "David!"

He came racing in, expecting another H.A.T.E. attack, because his Colt Special was in his hand. He gave me a hand with a chair when I told him what I suspected.

I stepped onto the chair. I ran my fingertips around the head on the hinge-bolt. It was loose. I pried it off. Less than a half-inch of rod remained. Someone had sawed it across. I fumbled around. I found a thin black sewing thread.

I pulled on the thread and the tiny cylinder that held the false microfilm came up from the hollow section where the hinge-rod should have been had it not been sawed off.

David let out a whoop of delight.

The case was closed.

We drove back to London three hours later, after the local constabulary had been to and gone from the manor house. They had taken the dead Willi Vogel off to the morgue. David and I were in the clear. It had not taken long when they saw the hole that had been burned in my dress.

David also cleared up the mystery of how Eric Downes had died, too. They took along the heat gun as evidence, but they promised to get it back to us as soon as it had been photographed and fingerprinted. The fingerprints on it matched with those of Willi Vogel, I learned later. So what else is new?

"What are we going to do tonight?" I asked David as he helped me out of our rented Bentley before the Grosvenor House.

"We're dining in your room," he grinned. "On oysters and truffles, on mushrooms, eggs and sea food. It will be seasoned with pepper, with garlic and with cinammon."

"Why David Anderjanian," I giggled. "Don't you know what those foods *do* to people? They're well-known aphrodisiacs."

"Yeah," he breathed happily.

The food was delicious as well as functional, I found, munching on hotly seasoned crabmeat. The wine—Romance-Conti, '57—was the perfect complement to the sea food.

David was quite excited about me by the time the meal was over. Great stuff, those truffles! Of course, the fact that I was wearing only a black nylon shortie nightie (*sans* the panties) might have had something to do with his excitement. I like to think so, anyhow.

Because he grabbed me when I would have wheeled the serving table to one side. His hands were on my behind, his lips were nuzzling up my belly under the shortie nightie to find my nipples.

"Oh my goodness, David," I squealed happily.

"Goodness has nothing to do with it," he grinned.

His hands held me down while his lips went up my legs and down my legs and in between my legs until I was writhing and panting and twisting, oblivious and blind to everything but that mouth and tongue. My mouth was wide open and after a few moments I realized it was my vocal chords doing all that yelling.

"David darling," I panted. "Dear darling David come on, you bastard! I'm dying and you—"

He slid away from me. I did not believe my eyes. He was walking across the room buck naked and was reaching into a bureau drawer.

"David Anderjanian, have you taken leave of your senses? Here I was floating along on cloud nine and you just up and—what the hell are you going to do with *that*?"

He was bringing a scissors out of the bureau drawer. He said with a grin, "I bought it the day you left for Hamburg, honey. I left it in your bureau drawer so it would be on hand when we needed it."

"Oh," I said like a dumb bunny. "What do we need it for?"

David bent and cut the phone wire. It snapped easily. "The phone won't ring now, goddammit," he laughed.

He threw the scissors away and came back onto the bed. His hands pushed my thighs wide open. Then he was crawling up and—

I rolled over onto cloud nine again.

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"LAY ME ODDS—if you have the guts. My name is Eve Drum. I'm **THE LADY FROM L.U.S.T.**—the wildest, nuttiest secret agent who ever drove the Kremlin out of its vodka-guzzling skull. They aren't kidding when they call me the sexiest spy in the world. As Agent Oh Oh Sex I take on the kind of assignments Jimmy Bond can't handle. All hell breaks loose when I go into action against the sinister forces of H.A.T.E. Don't tangle with me because I'll love you to death. I have a license to kill and I don't care whether I use my body—or a bullet. Sex is my deadliest weapon, but I'm just as good with a knife. Don't tell me about Judo or fast cars or brainwashing because I know it all. I'm good and you know it. Watch me use exotic Eastern sex techniques to turn H.A.T.E.'s villainous spy-masters into helpless blobs of desire. Swing along with me as I bump and grind through London strip clubs in pursuit of missing microfilm. Join the fun as I mix business with pleasure, martinis with molotov cocktails. With a Beretta in my bra I'm an up-dated Fanny Hill, a tastier brand of Candy, a lethal Lolita. My crazy life is just filled with bloodshed, bedrooms and belly laughs."